

**LAVINIA FONTANA; AN ARTIST AND HER SOCIETY
IN LATE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY BOLOGNA**

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the career of one of Europe's first truly successful female painters with the largest attributable oeuvre of any woman artist before the 18th century. It incorporates an analysis of the tastes and consumption patterns, lifestyles and mentalities of the patriciate, clergy and scholars of Counter Reformation Bologna who were her patrons. The intent is to identify and categorise her patrons and to explore her artistic appeal to them and to explain the work opportunities created by Counter Reformation initiatives including church refurbishment and charity institutions. It breaks down into six chapters: the first concerns family background, how and why Fontana's painter father Prospero trained her as a painter, the circumstances surrounding her marriage and how it contributed to her career: The second is about her initial clientèle of scholars and intellectuals connected with the University at Bologna whose portraits she painted and the Europe-wide cult of collections of images of *uomini famosi* which helped to give her an international reputation. The three middle chapters deal with the group of Bolognese noblewomen who were undoubtedly Fontana's most significant and high spending patrons, for whom she painted altarpieces, portraits and private devotional works and to whom she became personally connected through godparentage (she had eleven children). One of these chapters looks at these patrons in general terms, the next concerns Laudomia Gozzadini, for whom Fontana painted an enormous family portrait that had very special significance and resonance in the lives of both patron and painter. The fifth chapter considers the work Fontana produced for wealthy widows in Bologna. By identifying some of the widows in question it has been possible to pursue their particular family circumstances to see what kind of widow sought to commemorate her state and what options for interpretation were offered within predicative literature. The sixth and final chapter looks at work intended for the youth of Bologna and pictures that involved children from the moment of conception until their late adolescence. The diversity of her patrons and their artistic needs demonstrates the expansion and success of Fontana's business.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the career of Lavinia Fontana in Bologna. She was born in that city, baptised on August 24, 1552 and lived there until 1604. Then she moved to Rome, where she died on August 11, 1614. Fontana can be described as the first truly professional woman painter, not only in Italy, but in Western Europe to receive real acclaim. In her native city, she received many of the same kinds of commissions as her male colleagues obtained: she produced portraits of prominent members of Bolognese society, painted small private devotional works and large scale altarpieces for churches and confraternities. She also executed paintings depicting mythological subjects and, in so doing, Fontana appears to have been the first early modern female artist to paint female nudes. Her *oeuvre* constitutes an extremely large and varied corpus for which she was widely recognized in her own time.

Despite the exceptional nature of Lavinia Fontana's life and work she has been at best neglected and at worst little esteemed by historians of women artists¹. Indeed, her very success has probably contributed to this lack of regard. To those who prefer to see women experiencing struggle and crisis in their endeavours to become artists, Lavinia's life must seem suspiciously effortless. She has the largest known *oeuvre* of any woman artist before the eighteenth-century and at the same time she seems to have been happily married. Certainly she was constantly lauded with praise. In contrast, to peruse a collection of the biographies of the women artists of the Renaissance and Baroque ages, is to read a series of

¹ The only notable exception is Eleanor Tufts, who published a general book on women artists, *Our Hidden Heritage* (London/New York, 1974) and also wrote two articles on Lavinia Fontana. E. Tufts, "A Successful 16th Century Portraitist. Ms Lavinia Fontana from Bologna," *Art News*, LXXVII, 1974, pp.60-64 and E. Tufts, "Lavinia Fontana, Bolognese Humanist" in *Le arti a Bologna e in Emilia dal XVI al XVII secolo*, ed. A. Emiliani (C.I.H.A., Bologna, 1982), pp.129-134.

trials, tribulations and tragedies. For example, one reads of the saintly Caterina Vigri, the "painter nun" of Quattrocento Bologna, who produced works of art for her convent, and was later beatified for her holiness and self-sacrifice, dying, as she did, nursing another nun back to health². Vasari laments the wronged Properzia de Rossi, the Bolognese sculptress, who was spurned by her lover, and who died in a pauper's hospice the very day Pope Clement VII wanted to meet her³. Sofonisba Anguissola, the Cremonese noblewoman, is seen as something of an adventuress - leaving her native town to become court painter to Philip II of Spain, defying convention at 40 by marrying a "dashing sea-captain" much younger than herself and allegedly inferior to her in status⁴. The Venetian writer Ridolfi writes of Marietta

²The artistic work of Caterina Vigri (examples of which can be seen in her convent of Corpus Domini in Bologna) has yet to be considered separately from other aspects of her life, which include the writing of a religious tract on "spiritual weapons", *Le Sette Arme*. See T. Bergamini, *Caterina la Santa: breve storia di Santa Caterina Vigri 1413-1563* (Rovigo, 1970).

³Properzia de' Rossi was probably born around 1490 and died in 1530. The one ^{work} securely attributable to her is a sculptural relief of "Joseph and Potiphar's Wife" for the doors of the cathedral of San Petronio (Museo del Duomo, San Petronio). She is also described as engraving tiny scenes on fruit pits (examples attributed to her are in the Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna, and the Museo degli Argenti, Pitti Palace, Florence). Vera Fortunati-Pietrantonio discusses these works in "Per una storia della presenza femminile nella vita artistica del Cinquecento bolognese: Properzia de' Rossi, 'schultrice'", *Il Carrobbio*, VIII, 1981, pp.168-177. Most of the information on Properzia comes from Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, (1568 edition), Book V, where he dedicates a life to her. He comments not only on Properzia's skills as a sculptor, but on her beautiful physique. Apparently from the upper-middle class, she was spurned by a lover and died in a hospital for the syphilitic, on the very day Pope Clement VII asked to meet her. The "tragedy" of her life was dramatised in several nineteenth-century plays, discussed in Frederika Jacobs, "The construction of a life: Madonna Properzia de' Rossi 'schultrice' bolognese", *Word and Image*, 9, 1993, pp.122-132. Sheryl Reiss found further documentary evidence on Properzia, which she is implicated in law suits for causing disturbances to her neighbours, Sheryl Reiss, "Properzia de' Rossi - a Sixteenth-Century Bolognese Sculptor", unpublished paper.

⁴Anguissola is introduced in these terms in Ilya Sandra Perlingieri, *Sofonisba Anguissola: The First Great Woman Artist of the Renaissance* (New York, 1992). However, the Lomellini family were clearly of such standing in Genoa that Van Dyck painted their family portrait during his period in the city.

Anguissola's marriage with Orazio Lomellino is discussed in the next chapter.

Tintoretto, whose artistic talent was suppressed by her father Jacopo since he could not bear the idea of being parted from his beloved daughter if her career as a painter became a success⁵. In the seventeenth-century we learn of the drama of the life of Artemisia Gentileschi - suffering the humiliation and trauma of having to prosecute her teacher, Agostino Tasso, for rape and later in life in debt from her husband borrowing in her name⁶.

For the Bolognese of the seventeenth-century, Elisabetta Sirani was another abused heroine. Her father Andrea kept her in poverty by taking all the proceeds from her work, leaving her to paint pictures secretly to allow herself a little extra income. When she died mysteriously at the age of twenty seven, her family, outraged at this source of support being taken from them, placed their maidservant on trial for having poisoned her⁷. In other words, the image depicted of the early modern woman artist is a very Hegelian one. She either suffers for her art, or the tragedy of her death is made most poignant by a young talent cut down before its prime, or else she is shown to have a very dominant personality, one who is not afraid to brave high seas for her career and reputation.

Certainly a writer from the turn of the century, Laura Ragg, felt that the above considerations should figure prominently in the assessment of a female painter. In her *Women Artists of Bologna*, she writes with sympathy on Caterina Vigri, Properzia de Rossi

⁵Carlo Ridolfi, "The Life of Marietta Tintoretto, the Daughter of Jacopo" from *The Life of Tintoretto* (1642), trans, Catherine and Robert Enggass (University Park and London, 1984).

⁶The effect of Artemisia's relationship with Tassi on her career is the primary focus of Mary Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi, the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton, 1989). Elizabeth Cropper discovered documents which indicated her husband Pietro Stiatessi was borrowing money in her name, "New documents for Artemisia Gentileschi's life in Florence" *Burlington Magazine*, CXXXV, No 1088, 1993, pp.760-761.

⁷Valeria Moretti, *Il Pennello Lacrimato, sulle tracce di Elisabetta Sirani* (Bologna, 1990).

and Elizabetta Sirani⁸. However, she is positively scathing about what she sees as the "bourgeois normality" of Lavinia's life and clearly felt that this somehow detracted from her merits as a painter. Ragg associated physical beauty with artistic talent, believing that Caterina Vigri was blessed with a saintly radiance, Properzia de Rossi of a striking handsomeness and Elizabetta Sirani with a pretty grace. A portrait she had seen in the Uffizi, supposedly of Lavinia Fontana (although not by her) she considered showed a "curiously hermaphroditic" countenance and her belief that Lavinia was somehow "unwomanly" seems in part to have caused Ragg to be derogatory about Lavinia's skills.

Lavinia fares little better in those works which are regarded as some of the more important studies of women artists in the last decades. Nochlin and Sutherland Harris in the exhibition catalogue from 1976, *Women Artists, 1550-1950*, describe her as not having "achieved the spectacular success of Sofonisba Anguissola", which, as will presently be discussed, was not in fact the case and they pay more attention to seventeenth-century writers who speak slightly of her, than to contemporary views of how Lavinia was regarded in her own time⁹. She is mentioned only twice, once simply as a name on a page and within the context of a medal cast in her honour in Parker and Pollock's *Old Mistresses* of 1981, a work

⁸Laura M. Ragg, *Women Artists of Bologna* (London, 1908). See also Mary Garrard, "Re-view of Laura M. Ragg, *The Women Artists of Bologna*", *Women's Art Journal*, #2, Fall/Winter, 1980-81, pp.58-64.

⁹Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (Los Angeles, New York 1976), pp.31, 111-114. This exhibition catalogue was a pioneering work in the history of women artists. However, as their work was largely drawn from secondary sources, they reiterated many inaccuracies about Lavinia Fontana. For example, they assert that her first altarpiece commission only came in 1589, when her first documentable one was in 1583.

which makes much of the contributions of Anguissola and Gentileschi¹⁰. Even works which are more fulsome in their acknowledgement of Lavinia's achievements contain inaccurate information. Germaine Greer, for example, asserts that Lavinia had no interest in training young women as painters and that she had been training a son as a painter, but he did not outlive her. This "son" was actually a daughter, and there are also indications that Lavinia taught some of the daughters of the Bolognese nobility as well¹¹. A recent work by Whitney Chadwick suggests that Lavinia was not allowed to enter the Carracci Academy when it opened in 1580 as nude drawing was an essential component of their Academy. Not only is there no documentation to suggest that Lavinia ever tried to enter this institution, but by 1580 she was solidly established as painter in her own right¹².

Italian scholars have to date provided the most substantial work on Lavinia. In 1940, the Director of the Biblioteca Comunale in Imola, Romeo Galli published the first monograph on the artist¹³. Galli was aided by a collection of documents pertaining to Lavinia's life, purchased from her husband's family, the Zappi, at the end of the nineteenth-century, which included the details of Lavinia's marriage, a record of the names of her children and their godparents, letters and contracts to and from some of her clients (although

¹⁰Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses, Women, Art and Ideology* (London, 1981).

¹¹Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race* (London, 1979), pp.208-214. Her reference to the son Fontana was training probably comes from a mis-reading of Mancini's passage on Fontana in his *Considerazione sulla Pittura* of 1621 when he refers to a daughter who died at the age of 14, who "*mostrava gran talento nella pittura*". Fontana's possible training of girls from the nobility is mentioned in Chapter 3 of this thesis, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone".

¹²Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London, 1990, revised 1994), p.84.

¹³Romeo Galli, *Lavinia Fontana Pittrice, 1552-1614* (Imola, 1940).

not from anyone in Bologna while she herself was living there)¹⁴. Galli was thus able to provide an accurate chronology of Lavinia's life, with her birth and death dates, the terms of her marriage and the number of children (eleven) that she bore. In addition, he drew up a list of paintings by her hand both extant and lost, which he had culled from a variety of sources, including the list compiled by Marcello Oretti, the eighteenth-century Bolognese gentleman, who made inventories of works by Bolognese painters he had seen in his locality¹⁵. These lists were by no means exhaustive.

The chapter on Lavinia Fontana written by Vera Fortunati-Pietrantonio in the 1986 two volume work edited by her on sixteenth-century Bolognese painters provided a series of illustrations of Lavinia's pictures and added some new works to Lavinia's *oeuvre*¹⁶. But it was Maria Teresa Cantaro in 1989 who provided the tool which has allowed more progressive work on Lavinia to move apace¹⁷. Her book is a *catalogue raisonné* of much of Lavinia's known work presented in a chronological order, which allows one to come to an

¹⁴These documents are published in the appendix at the back of Galli's book and will be referred to throughout this text. They are held in the Biblioteca Comunale d'Imola (BCI). The Zappi family still have members in Imola today. It is possible that there are more documents pertaining to Lavinia's life in their family archive, but these papers have yet to be catalogued and I could not gain access to them.

¹⁵Marcello Oretti's inventories are kept in the Biblioteca Comunale del Archiginassio (hereafter BCB). They include, *Le pitture delle chiese della città di Bologna*, 1767, ms. B.30, BCB *Descrizione delle pitture che ornano le case de' cittadini della città di Bologna*, ms. B. 104, *Le pitture che si ammirano nei Palagi e case de' nobili della città di Bologna*, ms B.109, BCB *Le pitture nelli palazzi e case di villa del Territorio Bolognese*, ms. B.110, *Le pitture della città d'Imola*, ms B. 165, BCB.

¹⁶Vera Fortunati-Pietrantonio, "Lavinia Fontana" in Vera Fortunati-Pietrantonio, ed., *Pittura Bolognese del '500*, II (Bologna, 1986), pp. 727-775.

¹⁷Maria Teresa Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana bolognese "pittora singolare", 1552-1614* (Milan, 1989).

understanding of the development of Lavinia's pictorial style. Some of the attributions of paintings to Lavinia and some suggested dates are problematic, and there are lacunae, for example, she makes no reference to two paintings by Lavinia Fontana in America¹⁸. Nevertheless, Cantaro's book provides valuable illustrations of non-accessible works and as detailed a history of their provenance as possible, including, where known, names and information on her patrons. While this thesis discusses a significant percentage of Lavinia's works, Cantaro should still be employed to provide a comprehensive survey of her attributed *oeuvre*. She also compiled an appendix of most of the available documentation on Lavinia from primary and secondary sources. Much of this documentation was that already provided by Galli.

Most recently, an exhibition of Lavinia's work was arranged in Bologna by a committee led by Vera Fortunati-Pietrantonio¹⁹. While it provided little new documentation on Lavinia, it was the first time in which any number of the artist's works had been exhibited together. Furthermore, the exhibition contained two further new paintings unknown to Cantaro that could be positively attributed to Lavinia, although no mention was made of them or their provenance in the exhibition catalogue²⁰.

¹⁸These two works are *The Virgin and the Sleeping Christ Child* in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and *The Holy Family with Sts. Francis and Margaret*, signed by Lavinia and dated 1578, currently exhibited at Wellesly College. Liana Cheney discusses the iconography of this picture in "Lavinia Fontana: Boston Holy Family", *Woman's Art Journal*, I, 1984, pp.12-15.

¹⁹This exhibition was held in the Museo Civico Archeologico between October and December of 1994. *Lavinia Fontana, 1552-1614*, ex. cat, ed. Vera Fortunati (Milan, 1994).

²⁰These pictures are *Portrait of a Hirsute Girl* and *Portrait of a Young Boy*. They are discussed in Chapter Six. The one piece of new documentary evidence was discovered by Silvia Urbini in the Archivio di Stato in Bologna (hereafter ASB). It concerns payments made in the 1590s to Lavinia for paintings by Dionisio Ratta, a

These studies, in particular those by Galli and Cantaro, allow a reader to come to a clear understanding that in her own time and place, Lavinia Fontana was clearly regarded as an important painter. Her body of work alone attests to that. But these authors do not seek to "explain" the artist. Important questions need to be asked, such as, how and why did Lavinia Fontana become a painter and how did she come to rise to the top of her profession? How did Lavinia Fontana function within the context of her native city and how is the culture of Post-Tridentine Bologna significant in understanding her *oeuvre*? What was her relationship with her patrons, who were they, to what social groups did they belong? What did they want in a painting that she could give them? How did the artist develop her skills in order to take advantage of the artistic opportunities available to her? Further understanding of Lavinia Fontana's work can be gained by studying what value and meaning was placed on different types of images. What was the place of the devotional painting, or the portrait in a private home in Bologna? What was the function and significance for its donor of an altarpiece in a church?

The names of Lavinia's patrons provided by existing texts indicate that she established a broad client base in Bologna. Among her customers were scholars, clerics, the Bolognese patriciate, in particular noblewomen. A considerable proportion of her work was aimed at an audience of children. There is a paucity of formal contracts between Lavinia and her patrons (probably most of their agreements were verbal ones), but one can acquire a clear picture of the families for whom she worked, their tastes and their connections from an interpretation of a variety of documents not previously considered within the context of Lavinia's life and work (or indeed of any artist in Bologna). The largest source is

prominent cleric in Bologna and Rome. See Fortunati, ed. (*Milan, 1994*) p.204, notes 1 and 2, p.214 and 215, note 28 .

undoubtedly the collections of legal documents described as *istrumenti*. These are the notarial records kept by families relating to property transactions, wills, inventories - the entire contents of a house written down after the death of the owner - or the personal property of a household member, or the list (*corredo*) of objects, clothes, jewels that a bride took with her as a dowry into marriage. Inventories are particularly significant, as they include pictures and although they rarely mention the name of the artist, descriptions of the painting's subject matter help define Bolognese artistic taste in the late sixteenth-century and taken cumulatively, changes which occurred over time.

Other family papers include *libri di ricordi* - diaries and account books - which often serve the same purpose as property inventories and have been used here. A different kind of source are chronicles of Bologna which record significant events in the daily life of the city, important visitors, religious processions, the building of new churches or palaces, as well as the birth or death dates of members of the nobility, including those known to be Lavinia's clients, or the god fathers and god mothers of her children. *Laude*, praise in the form of poetry or prose of Bolognese noblewomen, a number of whom can be documented as Lavinia Fontana's patrons play a valuable role in helping to establish their identity²¹. A significant source which allows one to confirm that networks of families patronised Lavinia is Pompeo Dolfi's chronology of Bolognese families, which indicates who was married to whom and names of children they bore²². This work indicates that many of Lavinia's patrons were either from the same family, were cousins, or were related by marriage. Examining contemporary predicative literature, moralistic works directed towards the good conduct and lifestyles of

²¹These are discussed in Chapter Three, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone".

²²Pompeo Scipione Dolfi, *Cronologia delle Famiglie Bolognesi* (Bologna 1770, reprint, Bologna, 1990).

family members, in particular towards women, helps ascertain to what extent patterns of possessions and purchases conform to its recommendations and to what extent they deviate from them.

The employment of these sources has allowed a much clearer vision of Lavinia's patrons, what they sought from her art and what they got. The richest family archive, that of the Gozzadini family, fills an entire chapter on Laudomia Gozzadini, one of Lavinia's first significant noble patrons and reveals the meanings behind the enormous family portrait Lavinia painted for her²³. A passing reference to the prosecution of a homosexual in one of the chronicles of Bologna sheds light on the circumstances of an altarpiece commissioned from Lavinia in 1589²⁴. The correspondence between Bologna's scholarly community and other parts of the Republic of Letters shows how a substantial part of her career was spent acting as a portraitist to such men²⁵. The description of the articles in a dowry demonstrates that many of Lavinia's portraits of young noblewomen act as a visual *corredo*, while wills and other legal testaments indicate how noble women act as patrons of the arts as soon as they obtain financial power²⁶. A study of scientific literature and the ongoing beliefs in the magical power of images reveals how Lavinia's devotional paintings could have been used to help a women conceive a beautiful child²⁷.

In beginning research for this thesis, one problem that had to be addressed was that

²³See Chapter 4, "Laudomia Gozzadini and her Family Portrait".

²⁴See Chapter 2, "Painting for the Illustrious Man".

²⁵See Chapter 2, "Painting for the Illustrious Man".

²⁶These issues are discussed in Chapter 3, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone" and Chapter 5, "La Vita Vedovile".

²⁷See Chapter Six, "Putti, Pictures and Pedagogy".

of the "bias" of secondary and tertiary sources on late Cinquecento Bolognese painting. The main text for scholars of late Cinquecento and Seicento Bolognese painting is Carlo Cesare Malvasia's *Felsina Pittrice - Vite dei pittori bolognesi*, published in 1678 and *Le Pitture di Bologna*, published in 1686, which provided a guide to where particular paintings could be found in the city²⁸. Malvasia (1616-1693) was the Bolognese equivalent of Vasari and he wrote a series of biographies on Bolognese painters from Francesco Francia (1450-1518) to Elisabetta Sirani (1638-1665). While it is a useful source, some of his observations cannot be accepted without some reservations; he was not alive when most of the late Cinquecento painters were working and compiled their histories from traditional stories and verbal accounts. Although he refers to letters and contracts (some "tailor made" to underline his point), none are to be found now and so the archival underpinning of his work lacks verification²⁹.

Secondly, Malvasia was a man with a purpose. He was anxious to convey to his readers the impression that once a new generation of painters, namely the Carracci and their new style of painting were established in Bologna, Bolognese patrons turned to them and abandoned interest in the older generation who included artists like Lavinia. He implied that there was a conflict in the city between "the new" and "the old". Following Malvasia's

²⁸The reprints of Malvasia's texts used in this thesis are *Felsina Pittrice* (Bologna, 1678/1841), *Vite dei Pittori Bolognesi*, ed. Marcella Brascaglia (Bologna, 1971) and *Le Pitture di Bologna*, ed. Andrea Emiliani (Bologna, 1969).

²⁹Malvasia sees Lavinia Fontana's father Prospero as the primary example of the "old" versus the "new". He reproduces a letter apparently from Pompeo Vizzani to Dionisio Ratta in Rome, dated December 4, 1593 (*Bologna, 1678/1841*), I, p.241. Vizzani explains to Ratta (who is seeking a painter) that the Carracci are now charging two hundred scudi for their work, but that Prospero Fontana, who ordinarily charges one hundred, will accept whatever Ratta wishes to give him, thereby implying that the elderly painters is desperate for work in the face of Carracci ascendancy. There is no trace of this piece of correspondence.

descriptions, many scholars have accepted that this was indeed the case in Bologna³⁰. Yet the output of older painters like Bartolomeo Cesi, and Denis Calvaert throughout the last decades of the sixteenth-century and into the seventeenth did not diminish and they continued to attract the wealthiest patrons (Annibale Carracci probably moved to Rome at least in part because Bologna could not provide him with the kinds of projects he desired). There was no rejection process. That an easy co-existence between an older and a newer style was maintained is confirmed by the commission for the Rosary altarpiece in San Domenico at the end of the 1590s. In the fifteen small paintings depicting the mysteries of the Rosary, the hands of Lavinia Fontana, Denis Calvaert, Bartolomeo Cesi, Guido Reni, Ludovico Carracci, Francesco Albani and Domenichino have been discerned³¹. Furthermore, much of the Carracci production was as fresco painters. They excelled at decorating palaces. For physical reasons (she was pregnant for much of her career), this was an area not explored by Lavinia and thus, in many ways, comparison between the two is forced and difficult. There is, however, evidence to indicate that in the 1590s Lavinia would earn as much they did from painting and she certainly makes more appearances in contemporary literature about Bologna

³⁰Works which conform to this tradition include Donald Posner, *Annibale Carracci: A Study in the Reform of Italian Painting Around 1590* (London and New York, 1971) and Anton Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna: Visual Reality in Art after the Council of Trent* (The Hague, 1974). The format of the major exhibition on painting in Emilia Romagna and its catalogue, *The Age of Correggio and the Carracci, Emilian Painting of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Andrea Emiliani et al (Bologna, Washington, New York, 1986-7) corresponds to the format of Malvasia's *Felsina Pittrice*, with the section on the Carracci providing a "dividing line" between the sixteenth and the seventeenth-century painters. This version of history also corresponds with the vision of late sixteenth-century painting put forward by S. Freedberg, *Circa 1600, A Revolution of Style in Italian Painting* (Cambridge, MA, 1983).

³¹ G.C. Cavalli, "Il restauro dei quindici Misteri del Rosario", *La Biblioteca di S. Domenico*, 1959, pp.119-120. D. Scaglietti Kelescian, "I misteri del Rosario in S. Domenico" in *Dall'Avanguardia dei Carracci al secolo barocco* (Bologna, 1988).

than they do³². Moreover, she is even praised in the funeral oration for Agostino Carracci given by Lucio Faberio in 1603³³.

Therefore, the "Carracci Reform" debate, concerned as it is with stylistic progress, is one with little relevance to this thesis. Rather, its aim is to let the narrative of the painter's life unfold and be interpreted according to the world in which she lived and in so doing, not merely to write a life of a woman artist but to make a contribution to the cultural history of the city of Bologna in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY BOLOGNA

By the mid sixteenth-century, Bologna was Europe's second largest non-capital city after Lyons. Its history in the period was one of demographic fluctuation due to periodic cutbacks in the face of plague, which was almost endemic between 1589 and 1595. From a high of 72000 in 1581, its population fell to 60000 in 1597 (its size in 1569)³⁴. The 1590s were in fact a period of intense social polarisation. The industrial and commercial base of the city was its silk industry, which in 1587 allegedly employed between 20 and 25% of the

³²This literature is discussed in Chapter 3, "Painting for the Illustrious Man".

³³L. Faberio, *Il funerale di Agostino Carracci fatto in Bologna sua patria da gli Incamminati Accademia del Disegno. Oratione di Lutio Faberio Accademico Gelato in Morte di Agostin Carracci* (Bologna, 1603). Faberio mentions Prospero Fontana as one of Agostino's teachers and then describes him as "Father of the great Painter, Lavinia, whose worth (which shall be eternally praised in Bologna) has been commented upon and universally admired by many Princes, both ecclesiastical and secular.."

³⁴ A. Bellettini, *La Popolazione di Bologna dal Secolo XV all' unificazione Italiana* (Bologna, 1961) and Carlo Poni "Per la storia del distretto industriale serico di Bologna (secoli XVI-XIX)", *Quaderni Storici*, 72, April, 1990, pp.93-167.

Bolognese population³⁵. Certainly silk weaving was the dominant activity for women and girls³⁶. However, this industry, regarded as the most considerable and the finest in Europe, was organised by a small and powerful corporation of fifty six silk merchants (*L'arte della Seta*), thus constituting a very small oligarchy and a large working proletariat exposed to the vicissitudes of trade dislocation.

The city was situated in the fertile plains of Emilia Romagna, a fruit growing area, with orchards planted with pear and cherry trees and the mulberry production nourishing the silk worms providing the raw material for the trade. Such land was in the hands of Bologna's patriciate. Bologna also occupied a key site on trade routes through Italy, where intersected communications from Milan and the North, Venice and the Adriatic coast to Florence and Rome.

Bologna housed the first university in Europe, one particularly renowned in this period for science³⁷. In the sixteenth-century, this university experienced a conspicuous flowering of learning due to the presence of great scholars such as Andrea Alciati, Achille Bocchi, Carlo Sigonio, Luca Ghini, Ulisse Aldrovandi, Gaspare Tagliacozzi, Girolamo Cardano, to mention merely a few of those men who constituted a part of an international Republic of Letters drawing other scholars to the city, as well as a considerable number of students. In normal years, those when plague did not have a virulent presence, a vast number of students

³⁵*Memoriale delle gravetze dell'Arte della Seta* from March 11, 1587 claims it employed 24,900 workers in Bologna. Carlo Poni (cfr *ut supra*) suspects this number is exaggerated.

³⁶A. Guenzi, *La tessitura femminile fra città e campagna (Bologna secoli XVII-XVIII)* (Bologna, 1988).

³⁷Guido Zaccagnini, *Storia dello Studio di Bologna durante il Rinascimento* (Geneva, 1930).

required accommodation, so that house rents were always at a premium and demands for goods and services contributed to the wealth of the city.

The wealth of the nobility, in part founded upon land and urban rents was also intimately bound up with Bologna's political fortunes. Problems had existed in previous centuries from the conflict between desire by some of Bologna's leading families for self-rule and Bologna's status as part of the Papal States. In the fifteenth-century, the Bentivoglio established themselves as illegitimate "rulers" of Bologna and were only removed when Julius II invaded the city in 1506 and eventually restored the traditional balance of power³⁸. As a result, sixteenth-century government was divided into two parts, on the one hand a lay element which took the form of an oligarchical senate composed of the patriciate, meeting every Tuesday and Thursday and which in turn elected committees to preside over civic affairs and on the other hand a Roman element in the figure of the papal legate who dealt with justice and public order. The two parts of government apparently worked together reasonably harmoniously, with a general principle of "Nulla puo il Legato senza il Senato, nulla il Senato senza Legato"³⁹.

An immense boost to the fortunes of the patriciate and the city came with the election in 1572 of the first Bolognese Pope in four hundred years. Born Ugo Boncompagni in 1502, the future Gregory XIII came from one of the most important Bolognese noble families. Like all Popes, he used holy office to promote in the first instance his own family (he purchased a dukedom and a marquisate for his son), and in second instance those of his city upon whose

³⁸C.M. Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna* (1940, London reprint, 1970).

³⁹Mario Fanti provides a synthesis of Bolognese governmental structure in "Bologna nell'età moderna (1506-1796)" in *Storia di Bologna* (Bologna, 1978), pp.216-226.

support he could invariably depend⁴⁰. Offices, income and privilege emanated from this source for the Bolognese who certainly exploited "their" time in office. In 1582, a correspondent in Rome to the court of Urbino wrote home complaining of the reluctance of the Bolognese to hand over any privilege to anyone from elsewhere in Italy⁴¹. This influence manifested itself in considerable personal enrichment for individual Bolognese families and contributed to their spending power in their native city⁴².

Bologna during Lavinia Fontana's active professional life presented a spectacle of both a new prosperity located in the patriciate sector and a recurrent, acute need manifested amongst the working population attributable to the dislocation of the plague years. Ottavia

⁴⁰The privileges obtained by Ugo's son Jacopo are detailed in Chapter 3, "Representing the Bolognese Noblewoman". It is interesting that while later generations have euphemistically referred to Jacopo as Ugo's "nephew", in contemporary documents he is consistently described as his son.

⁴¹"*A corte, sono tutti bolognese, e si mandano le palle l'un (a) l'altro*". This remark was made by someone who was sympathetic towards the plight of Federico Zuccaro at the time when Bolognese artists had insisted upon a suit being brought against him as a non-Bolognese accepting a Bolognese commission (the "Procession of St. Gregory" for Paolo Ghiselli's chapel in S. Maria del Barraccano. See Detlef Heikamp, "Vicende di Federico Zuccaro", *Rivista d'Arte*, 1957, XXXII, series III, vol II, pp.175-232.

⁴²An examination of the linkages between Bolognese families and Rome and hence the power base of Gregory XIII and distribution of ranks and offices is the subject of a doctoral thesis in progress by Nicole Reinhardt, *Macht und Verflechtung - Rom und Bologna um 1600* under the supervision of Professor Wolfgang Reinhardt and Professor Michael Müller (Florence, European University Institute). The study of F. Piro, "Sistema fiscale, struttura, e congiuntura in un'economia preindustriale in caso di Bologna, 1564-1666" in *Annali dell'Istituto Italo-Germanico in Trento*, II, 1976 considers the vicissitudes of the Bolognese fiscal system during these years. Influence in Rome obviously gave scope for a return of taxation to the city and the Pope himself was invariably sympathetic to requests for help from his native city.

Niccoli sees as evidence of social problems gangs of orphan children roaming the streets⁴³; Lucia Ferrante has pointed to prostitution amongst low earning or destitute female silk workers⁴⁴. Very evidently, social polarisation divided the city.

A realisation of this dichotomy and the determination to do something to redress suffering and ignorance were the mainsprings of the reforming zeal of the Bishop of Bologna, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, one of the most energetic executors of the reforming mission of post-Tridentine Italy⁴⁵. Every scholar of Bologna is aware that the importance of Paleotti to the city can never be over-emphasised and any attempt to summarise his work would fail to do justice to the scope of his initiatives which were designed to bring together rich and poor by infusing the first with a recognition of their social obligations (*noblesse oblige*) and proffering the second succour and instruction⁴⁶. His aim was to turn Bologna into a model post-Tridentine city, one which epitomised the principles of the Catholic Reformation and his schemes, viewed in their totality amounted to nothing less than social engineering.

His closest episcopal counterpart was the Archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo, but as Paolo Prodi describes, Paleotti and Borromeo had a very different approach to church and city reform. Paleotti was close enough to Borromeo to be able to write to him without rancour, admonishing the Milanese for taking too much work upon himself, not delegating

⁴³Ottavia Niccoli, *Il Seme della violenza, Putti, fanciulli e mammoli nell'Italia tra Cinque e Seicento* (Bari, 1995).

⁴⁴Lucia Ferrante, "Pro mercede carnali....'Il giusto prezzo rivendicato in tribunale", *Memoria. Rivista di storia delle Donne*, 17, 1986.

⁴⁵Gabriele Paleotti (1522-1598) was made Bishop of Bologna in 1566. In 1583, he became an Archbishop when Gregory XIII made Bologna an Archbishopric.

⁴⁶The comprehensive account of Paleotti's life and works is provided by Paolo Prodi, *Il Cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, vols I and II, (Rome, 1967).

responsibilities to others and for being too hard and austere towards those under him⁴⁷. Paleotti himself sought to mobilise the social and economic resources of his city by creating institutional structures dedicated to specific enterprises. Paleotti's new ideas and programs were summarised in 1580, when *Episcopale Bononiensis*, a collection of his key sermons and decrees from the previous ten years was published⁴⁸. Amongst them, for example, was the student "Society of Perseverance", which only the brightest university students could join. Their duties included bringing instruction and aid to prisoners and the sick. He divided the city into four, and gave each quarter a prefect who oversaw its religious life and a clerical assembly where the district's curates could meet to discuss problems of conscience. Later, these assemblies merged into one large one, over which Paleotti himself presided. In the countryside, Paleotti formed the society of Corpus Christi, which could inspect priests of those more isolated parishes, those that were often responsible for the greatest numbers of church abuses. He promoted greater ecclesiastical involvement in the confraternities which governed many of the city's charitable institutions. These included Santa Maria della Pietà which ran an orphanage, Beata Vergine del Soccorso which gave help to the sick, Santa Maria del Baraccano, which brought up and gave dowries to "worthy" poor young girls, and the prestigious Arciconfraternità della Morte which ran a hospital and assisted in the

⁴⁷Paolo Prodi, "The Application of the Tridentine Decrees: The Organization of the Diocese of Bologna During the Episcopate of Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti" in Eric Cochrane, ed, *The Late Italian Renaissance* (London, 1970) cites the letter in which Paleotti chides Borromeo, written on December 5, 1566.

⁴⁸Paleotti wrote and oversaw the publication of many texts with spiritual themes. On the last page of *Episcopale Bononiensis*, he gives a list of "forthcoming" works, which include his own version of spiritual exercises, sermons to be given at weddings and at funerals, a confessional manual, a book on superstitions, a rosary manual written by the Jesuit Gasparo Loarte, a conduct book for nuns and instructions for priests giving sermons to nuns. All these works were to be published by Paleotti's publishing house of choice, Vittore Benacci.

mourning and burial services for condemned prisoners.

New church involvement still meant drawing upon the financial resources and administrative capacities of the wealthy laity. Paleotti had no new sources of wealth and described his approach as "mercantile wisdom"⁴⁹. A merchant does not squander resources already available to his business, if they have potential for profit. Nor should a bishop allow those assets already in possession to go to waste, but should remould and redirect them, for the Bishop is the "caretaker of the business of human souls".

An early and important concern of the reforming cleric was the use and function of religious images since a vital part of a Catholic's spiritual education was his visual formation. The decrees of the Council of Trent had underscored the fact that a Catholic should have access to religious images that had been sanctioned by a bishop, who had censored them for lascivious, or heretical subject matter⁵⁰. An initiative which is a good example of Paleotti's refusal to squander existing resources is the decree issued at the beginning of 1577, that on the first and second Sundays of March, parish priests should organise "restoration parties" to clean and repair images of saints painted on walls and porticos in the city⁵¹.

However, a refurbishment of the old could only be of limited efficacy. To enhance and augment the existing stock of publicly available "correct" religious images, the wealthy must be made aware of their responsibility to purchase religious images, not only for their

⁴⁹ See Prodi (*London, 1970*), pp.230-231 and "Spirito Episcopale e Direttive di Governo Pastorale", II (*Rome, 1967*), pp.7-73.

⁵⁰ Charles Dejob, *De l'influence du concile de Trente sur la littérature et les beaux-arts chez peuples catholiques* (Paris, 1884), H. Jedin, *History of the Council of Trent* (Edinburgh, 1963), Paolo Prodi, "Ricerche sulla teorica delle arti figurative nella riforma cattolica," *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà*, IV (1965), pp.123-212.

⁵¹ Paleotti, "Alli Curati della diocese per la restauratione delle imagine sacre", *Episcopale Bononiensis*, p.145.

own homes or private chapels, for the benefit of their own salvation, but to commission public works for their parish churches and confraternities for the benefit of those who could then view religious images that they could not afford to buy. In turn this would accrue to the benefit of painters themselves, who, if employed in executing holy work would not be forced to produce sinful, profane pictures. These ideas were formulated in Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle Immagine Sacre e Profano* completed in 1578, and published in 1582⁵².

The Bishop's initial intention was to write five books on the usefulness and meaning of religious images, how they should be painted; for what purposes they should be used and he also strongly cautioned against the proliferation of profane paintings. Only the first two of these tomes were ever published, although the chapter titles of the forthcoming books were printed demonstrating how he wished to address the issue of a picture's subject matter (the birth of the Virgin, her death and coronation etc.) and its specific destination (private chapel, confraternity, monastery). Significantly, Paleotti chose to dedicate the book to "La città di Bologna" and despite the advice of others, chose to publish the book in Italian, not Latin⁵³. Such decisions make his intentions clear: he wanted it read by anyone in Bologna whom art touched, painters, patrons, the private and public viewer, anyone with some kind of artistic responsibility towards the people - in other words, towards the entire city.

Paleotti's treatise is recognised as one of the most important books on Counter Reformation imagery. It was not the first post-Tridentine tract on art. In 1564, Andrea del

⁵²The most accessible edition of Paleotti's work is to be found in Paola Barocchi ed, *Trattati d'arte fra Manierismo e Controriforma* (Bari, 1961), II, pp.117-509.

⁵³Ulisse Aldrovandi, whose specific comments on Paleotti's book will be discussed in Chapter 6, thought that Paleotti should consciously appeal to a scholarly audience and thus he should write in Latin. Paleotti's response was that he wished his book to be read by all, including "Gli'illiterati".

Gilio wrote a treatise entitled *Degli errori e abusi degli pittore circa historie*, which he dedicated to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese⁵⁴. It was chiefly concerned with the profanity of the Sistine Chapel. Paleotti evidently read Giglio's text and it helped him to clarify his own ideas about good and evil in art. He was also interested in Johannus Molanus' *Artis Sacris e Profanus* of 1574⁵⁵. Molanus was Professor of Theology at Louvain and in 1578 Paleotti wrote to Carlo Borromeo, telling him he had found a copy of his book⁵⁶. Molanus' book was of a dry theological nature and he wrote his text in Latin, so that his target audience was a much more specialist one than Paleotti's. Borromeo's artistic tract of 1584 was also written in Latin ; this work was more an architectural treatise, a kind of inventory of articles and design prescriptions that a church needed to conform to Tridentine specifications⁵⁷.

The lengthiest commentaries on and analyses of Paleotti's work are provided by Paolo Prodi and Anton Boschloo. Prodi details the textual sources which inspired Paleotti, which ranged from the Ancient philosophers, through the founding fathers of the church to the most current works on sacred images⁵⁸. Prodi also identifies those men in Bologna from whom the Bishop sought advice in writing his book, including the Jesuit leader Francesco di Palmio, Lavinia Fontana's father, Prospero Fontana, the historian Carlo Sigonio and the naturalist

⁵⁴Giovan Andrea Gilio, *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori degli abusi de'pittori circa l'istorie* was first published in 1564. It is included in P. Barocchi ed (Bari, 1961), II, pp.1-115.

⁵⁵David Freedberg, "Johannes Molanus on Provocative Paintings", *JWCI*, 34, 1971, pp.229-245.

⁵⁶Prodi (Rome, 1967), II, p.531.

⁵⁷Carlo Borromeo, *Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae* (Milan, 1577), published in P. Barocchi, ed (Bari 1962), III, pp.1-113.

⁵⁸Prodi (Rome, 1967), Vol II, pp. 525-562.

Ulisse Aldrovandi, the architect and antiquarian Pirro Ligorio⁵⁹. Paleotti was anxious to have the endorsement of serious experts in the fields. Boschloo's account is more concerned with conveying the *raison d'être* behind Paleotti's work and in particular the Bishop's desire to explain the meaning and importance of religious images⁶⁰.

Paleotti touches on almost every matter related to artistic production although he deliberately eschews technical matters. His opening chapter insists that art is a gift from God, who must be acknowledged to be patron of the universe and he asserts that religion and image-making are both unique to mankind and cannot be separated⁶¹. He warns of the dangers of profane images, but acknowledges that they have their uses, in particular as a means of education about ancient history⁶². The most essential message is that religious images should be clearly conceived, easy to read (for paintings are *libri popolari*) and hence understood by the masses. They must always be textually correct and should not contain anything that an artist can have no idea about, such as more women than men being saved in the Last Judgement or more priests than kings, painting the conception of the Virgin, or placing Solomon in heaven or hell. Paleotti also deems it a slur on the Virgin to paint the Annunciation with a tiny Christ Child being borne towards her on a cloud aimed at her stomach⁶³. In these recommendations he calls for "verisimilitude"⁶⁴.

⁵⁹Prodi (*Rome, 1967*), II, p.532.

⁶⁰Boschloo (*The Hague, 1974*), pp.121-152.

⁶¹Paleotti (*Bari, 1961*), Book One, Chapter 1, p.127.

⁶²Paleotti, (*Bari, 1961*) "Delle cause perché s'introducessero le imagini profane", Book I, p.175.

⁶³Paleotti, (*Bari, 1961*) "Delle pitture sacre che peccano in materia di fede, e prima, delle pitture dette temerarie", Chapter 3, Book II.

Paleotti's call for verisimilitude has been taken out of context and urged to be one of the founding precepts of Carracci "naturalism"⁶⁵. However, as his text shows, his use of the word, taken in context reveals that for him, "verisimilitude" has nothing to do with artistic technique (which he admits he knows very little of and has little interest in), but is instead an insistence that the artist adheres to scriptural authority. The work is not a cry or demand for new artists with new styles, but rather an appeal, one couched very forcefully for the existing guard of Bolognese painters to be aware of their spiritual responsibility in shaping the minds of the masses.

Even this cursory resumé of the location of new wealth and power in Bologna emanating from the relationship with Rome and the new Bishop's interest in picture-making proffers clues to understanding the burgeoning of visual culture in the city in the closing decades of the sixteenth-century. Up until around 1575, it is fair to say that painting in Bologna had not been so lavishly cultivated as in many Italian cities. In part, this reflected the absence of a court, as in Mantua, Ferrara or Florence. There was no great ruling family, a Gonzaga, d'Este or Medici to lead the way in promoting the visual arts. There were wealthy families, but none with the vast wealth of the upper echelons of Venetian mercantile society who encouraged the artistic production of the Bellini, Titian, Tintoretto. The very talented mid sixteenth-century Bolognese painters, when given the opportunity, would move to areas where regular commissions were guaranteed - Nicolò dell'Abate went to

⁶⁴Paleotti, "Delle pitture inette et indecore" (*Bari, 1961*), Chapter 27, Book II, p.370.

⁶⁵These ideas were originally expressed by Aldo Foratti, *I Carracci nella teoria e nella pratica* (Città di Castello, 1913) and particularly endorsed by Boschloo (*The Hague, 1974*).

Fontainebleau⁶⁶. Although some of the sixteenth-century's greatest artistic forces, Michelangelo and Parmigianino were both resident for a time in the city, there was neither sufficient high paying business nor prestigious commissions to sustain their presence⁶⁷. Vasari, who in 1539 spent time in Bologna painting the refectory of San Michele in Bosco, gives quite a clear picture of the problems painters in Bologna faced - describing how the lack of regular commissions made Bolognese painters anxious when work was given to foreigners⁶⁸.

Indeed, as a working generalisation, it can be said that in the earlier part of the sixteenth-century, the Bolognese had restricted their painting commissions to altarpieces for their family chapels in their parish churches and fresco cycles to decorate their palaces. These were occasional purchases and it is true that significant investments were sometimes made; Elena Duglioli dall'Oglio commissioned Raphael to paint the *Saint Cecilia* altarpiece for her chapel in the church of San Giovanni in Monte in 1516⁶⁹. Many families had complex

⁶⁶Sylvie Béguin, "I pittori bolognese a Fontainebleau" in V. Fortunati-Pietrantonio, ed (*Bologna*, 1985), I, pp. 237-268

⁶⁷Both Michelangelo and Parmigianino used Bologna as a "refuge point" from political troubles. Condivi, *Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti* (1553 - translated by George Bull, Oxford, 1987), pp.17-19 gives an account of how Michelangelo escaped from Florence to Bologna before the collapse of the Medici régime in 1494. Parmigianino went to Bologna following the Sack of Rome. Vasari, *Le Vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori* (1568, Florence, 1906, reprinted, 1981), V, pp.217-238.

⁶⁸Certainly this was Federico Zuccaro's experience! Patricia Rubin, *Vasari, Art and History* (New Haven, 1995) provides a good synthesis of Vasari's experiences in, and remarks about, Bologna, pp.164-166.

⁶⁹For the genesis and impact of Raphael's painting, see A. Emiliani, ed., *L'Estasi di Santa Cecilia di Raffaello d'Urbino nella Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna* (Bologna, 1983).

and detailed fresco cycles on their palace walls⁷⁰. Yet altarpiece paintings in their chapels were still not the choice of every family and there was a distinct paucity of possession of paintings in the home, as is evinced by the pre 1570 property inventories, which indicate that there were no more than a handful of homes which had more than one or two devotional pictures on their walls. However later property inventories from the mid 1570s demonstrate an increasing concern with the ownership of paintings⁷¹.

In short, Bolognese consumption patterns, as seen in buildings and paintings, reflected the greater financial bonuses and privileges experienced by the patriciate from the relationship with Rome. In addition, there were more commissions for chapels and pictures to adorn the charitable initiatives of the Counter-Reformation, as Paleotti had urged. More painters were at work in the city during the last three decades of the sixteenth-century than had previously been visible and this was true in spite of the continued migration of painters towards Rome⁷².

If the production of devotional paintings, altarpieces for private chapels, family chapels in parish churches and works commissioned by religious orders bears a relationship to Paleotti's text, which forms the ideological backdrop for artistic production in the city, not

⁷⁰Anton Boschloo, *Il fregio dipinto a Bologna da Nicolò dell' Abate ai Carracci, (1550-1580)*, (Bologna, 1984).

⁷¹See appendix for examples of late sixteenth-century property inventories in Bologna.

⁷²This can be seen from a "roll call" of the names of significant painters in Bologna from the first and second half of the sixteenth-century. Those in the first include Francesco Francia Bagnacavallo, Girolamo da Carpi, Biagio Pupini, Girolamo da Treviso, as well as the afore-mentioned. Nicolò dell'Abate, Bartolomeo Passerotti and Prospero Fontana bridge the two halves and then one sees a flourishing of artists, including their offspring, Lavinia Fontana, Tiburzio, Aurelio and Paserotto Passerotti, as well as Bagnacavallo Junior, Nosadella, Pellegrino and Domenico Tibaldi, Lorenzo Sabatini, Orazio Sammachini, Denis Calvaert, Ercole and Camillo Procaccini, Cesare Aretusi, Bartolomeo Cesi.

all work was of an ecclesiastical nature and despite the Bishop's disapproval, profane fresco cycles were still painted on the walls of family palaces and mythological paintings were popular. Furthermore, there was a demand for portraits not previously apparent in sixteenth-century Bologna. The city's wealthier citizens who, while they may have responded to Paleotti, also saw an opportunity to promote their own self-image and a new visual identity, both in private and in public. In short, developments multiplied the possibilities for picture production and Lavinia Fontana's life was coincident with this burgeoning of opportunities. How they were fashioned to her own capabilities in the promotion of a successful career will be the concern of this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAKING OF A WOMAN ARTIST

"It is a fact that that unhappy sex, because of being reared within the confines of the home and kept from the exercise of various pursuits becomes soft and has little aptitude for noble pursuits"¹
 (Carlo Ridolfi, 1642)

Ridolfi, in his biographical sketch of Marietta Tintoretto, addressed himself to a critical question which has taxed more recent generations of art historians when considering women painters: why are there so few of them? His conclusion, one that in our times has become the commonest explanation of their relative paucity, was to blame the socialisation process of women. To pursue the life of the painter (with exceptions made for a career conducted within a court or convent) entailed negotiating with the outside world, stepping into the most public of spaces to consult with and woo potential patrons, conducting business deals and doing all that was requisite to establish a professional and public reputation. Such activities transgressed all the social norms deemed appropriate for women from all but the lowest classes whom sheer economic necessity drove into the public sphere to sell their labour in the market. As Christiane Klapisch-Zuber remarked, in the case of women, *l'honneur n'est pas du côté du travail*². If within the confines of the home a patrician girl might receive lessons in drawing and painting, to cross over from private to the public marketing of her talent (presuming such to exist) was a step too far. Accomplishment was one thing, the commercialisation of a skill another.

¹Carlo Ridolfi, "The Life of Marietta Tintoretto, the Daughter of Jacopo" from *The Life of Tintoretto* (1642), trans, Catherine and Robert Enggass (University Park and London, 1991), p. 98.

²Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Femme et Travail*, conference working paper, European University Institute, Florence, 1986.

In identifying the socialisation process as the major impediment to the emergence of a woman artist, recent art historians have added others: the difficulties of apprenticeship within a workshop full of adolescent boys and men: hostilities to women from male guilds resenting any intrusion into a male preserve, the scepticism of potential clients towards the abilities of a woman artist. The career of a woman artist has been unambiguously designated as an "obstacle race" and the first question to be asked about any woman who gained some recognition in the field is how did she get started?

Such a question then has *ab initio*, to be asked of the early career of Lavinia Fontana and the question gains in interest because, once launched, she was with remarkable rapidity integrated into the tradition of illustrious Bolognese women who were the subject of *laude*, literary panegyrics and, not least, she received some of the most prestigious commissions the city could offer. In a purely professional sense she was regarded as having the talents of the best male painters, but her womanhood made her an especially noteworthy phenomenon. Her sex, which was usually an obstacle to freedom of choice and development, instead became an asset to be exploited. The ways in which Bolognese society endorsed and supported Lavinia is a theme that will run throughout this study, but that endorsement followed upon a carefully devised strategy designed to permit her to assume the status of a professional artist. To be a talented and adaptable artist, capable of producing aesthetically pleasing pictures in almost every genre which appealed to a clientèle is only a part of the story. The rest is about the construction of a career through contacts, the right client base which could be developed and expanded, and the establishment of a professional persona with supporting services to carry out those aspects of the business of an artist which a woman could not do without difficulty, such as the negotiation of credit. In every sense, the career of Lavinia Fontana, like those of most women artists, was "made" by a careful process of construction.

In that process the role of her father and his associates was fundamental.

It is widely acknowledged that most of the best known Italian women painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came from artistic families. But very few male artists in fact taught their daughters to paint. The example of Titian is instructive. His daughter Lavinia was not taught to paint professionally, but instead raised as a patrician and given a dowry large enough to attract a noble husband³. Such a marriage would have only enhanced the standing of Titian and his entire family in the Venetian State. It was a marker of his success. Other artists were not of Titian's wealth and status and had to confront different problems.

Most of the best known Italian women painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries came from an artistic family. In addition to Lavinia, the daughter of Prospero Fontana, were Barbara Longhi (1552-1638) born to the painter Luca Longhi of Ravenna, Marietta Tintoretto (1554-1590) born to Jacopo Tintoretto, Fede Galizia (1578-1630), the daughter of Nuncio Galizia of Turin, and Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1652) the daughter of Orazio Gentileschi. While these women had different subsequent careers as painters, their childhood experience had certain common elements. They were all taught to paint at "home", and if they were given lessons by other painters, (as Artemisia Gentileschi was, albeit with disastrous personal consequences) or mingled with their father's apprentices, it was within a parental home/workshop where their daughter-status was recognised⁴. They could see their

³Titian's wife Cecilia died on August 5, 1530, after giving birth to Lavinia. Lavinia Vecellio was married in 1555 to Cornelio Sarcinelli with a dowry of 1400 scudi and she died in 1561. Taken from the chronology of Titian's life in *Titian, Prince of Painters*, ex. cat, Washington, 1990, pp.407-43.

⁴For the details of the trial of the rape of Artemisia by Agostino Tassi, the artist employed by Artemisia's father Orazio to give her lessons see the appendix of Mary Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi, The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art*

fathers handle patrons, learn how to ingratiate themselves, and flatter them and in time, if they became independent painters in their own right, their fathers' patrons might become their own. They all entered the artistic profession with more advantages than those born outside a painter's world.

Financial consideration doubtless motivated many of these artist fathers to teach their daughters to paint. If a daughter showed some talent, there was no reason why she should not be employed as an extra pair of hands in a family workshop (one has no idea of how many anonymous women did in fact work in this capacity). Barbara Longhi seems to have been set to work alongside her brother Francesco from an early age, and must have contributed to the Longhi family economy with her portraits and devotional paintings⁵. Similarly, Marietta Tintoretto worked from her home environment and apparently turned down an invitation from Philip II to go to Spain, as her father could not do without her company⁶. While little is known of Fede Galizia, she evidently demonstrated an artistic talent that her father felt could not go to waste. Nunzio Galizia clearly planned an artistic career for his precociously talented daughter at a very early age - in a sonnet of 1587 Lomazzo writes that the nine year old Fede was being taught how to paint. By the age of eighteen she evidently had quite a substantial body of work⁷.

(Princeton, 1989) which contains a transcription of the trial. The best assessment of Artemisia's early years is to be found in Elizabeth Cropper, "Artemisia Gentileschi" in Giulia Calvi, ed., *Barocco al femminile* (Bari, 1991).

⁵Liana Cheney, "Barbara Longhi of Ravenna", *Woman's Art Journal*, 9,1, 1988, pp.16-20

⁶Carlo Ridolfi (*Venice, 1642/Penn State 1984*), pp.98-110.

⁷Known documents pertaining to Fede Galizia's life are published in Flavio Caroli, *Fede Galizia* (Turin, 1989). Her age is established by the inscription on her portrait of the Jesuit scholar, Paolo Morigia (Milan, Ambrosiana), painted in 1596,

Before her reputation was tarnished through sexual liaison with Agostino Tassi, Orazio Gentileschi alleged that he had planned to send Artemisia to a convent, perhaps hoping that her artistic training would serve in lieu of a dowry⁸. In another case, lack of means to provide for his numerous daughters impelled the Cremonese nobleman, Amilcare Anguissola, to provide them with artistic training and to promote them as painters. It was as a talented painter that Sofonisba Anguissola gained entrance to the Sforza court at Milan, where she secured sufficient reputation as a portraitist to be invited to Spain to serve as a painter and lady-in-waiting to Elisabeth de Valois⁹.

Evidence suggests that Lavinia Fontana was comparatively old before she began to be established as a professional painter. Other women artists of this period were producing signed and dated paintings before they were out of their teens¹⁰. However, Lavinia's earliest dated work is from 1575, when she was twenty three years old¹¹. Vasari, in his 1568 edition of *Lives of the Artists* mentions the artistic abilities of Barbara Longhi, who was a year

in which she identifies herself as being aged 18. The previous year, Morigia in his book *Nobiltà di Milano* describes a number of people Fede had painted. Lomazzo dedicated a sonnet to Nunzio and Fede in his *Rime* (Milan, 1587).

⁸So Orazio Gentileschi testified at Artemisia's trial, See E.Cropper (*Bari* 1991), p.196.

⁹For Anguissola's early years, see I.S. Perlingieri, *Sofonisba Anguissola, The First Great Woman Artist of the Renaissance* (New York, 1992) and the opening chapters to Mina Gregori, ed. *Sofonisba Anguissola e le sue Sorelle* (Ex. Cat, Milan, 1994). In order to promote his daughter, between 1556 and 1559 (when Sofonisba went to Spain) Amilcare Anguissola corresponded with the Duchess of Mantua, Michelangelo and Annibale Caro. See appendix to *Ex Cat*, 1994, pp. 363-366.

¹⁰Both Fede Galizia and Artemisia Gentileschi, before they were twenty. Perhaps both benefitted, however, from Lavinia's ground-breaking example.

¹¹There is no doubt that Fontana must have been painting before this time and must have learnt drawing from an early age, discussed below.

younger than Lavinia, yet Lavinia herself does not find mention in this text¹². Since Vasari knew Prospero Fontana very well, it seems likely that had Lavinia been practising as a painter, he would have known¹³. Furthermore, in 1575, Mutio Manfredi, the poet and writer from Guastavilla, gave a lecture on the excellence of womanhood, in which he also praised Barbara Longhi, but said nothing about Lavinia¹⁴.

Such negative evidence points to a late public debut as a painter for Lavinia, which can be explained in a number of ways. The first, and least probable, reason is that her family's aspirations for her were kept a secret until she could produce something worthy of praise. The second, and one which is reinforced by the chronology of her father's career, is that Lavinia did not engage in a serious artistic career until relatively late in life. As she was growing up, her family, especially her father, may not have intended that she should ever become a painter.

To comprehend more fully Lavinia's position as she reached the age of twenty, one must begin with her father and consider his life situation and the problems that he was facing.

¹²"(una) piccola fanciuletta, chiamata Barbera (sic), disegna molto bene; et ha cominciato a colorire alcune cose con assai buona grazia e maniera. G. Vasari, *Le Vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori* (1568, Florence, 1906, reprinted, 1981), VII, p.421.

¹³As Vasari himself states in the 1568 edition of *Le Vite* (Florence, 1981), VIII, p.410: "E per vero dire il Bagnacavallo ed il Fontana sono valent'huomini, ed io che dell'uno e dell'altro mi sono assai servito, cioe del primo a Roma, e del secondo a Rimini ed a Fiorenza."

¹⁴"Sappiate che in Ravenna e hoggi una fanciulla di età di diciotto anni, figliuola di Messere Luca Longhi, Eccellentissimo Pittore, a quale in questa arte e si meravigliosa.." Mutio Manfredi, *Della Eccellentia della Donna, Lettione del Signor Mutio Manfredi pubblicamente recitata nella illustre Accademia de Confusi in Bologna, Feb. III 1575* (Bologna, 1575). Barbara would have been four years older than the age Manfredi gives her, so Manfredi is either guessing her age, or he wrote the lecture some time before he actually gave it. See Chapter Two, "Painting for the Illustrious Man" for correspondence between Lavinia and Mutio when she was older.

Prospero Fontana managed to establish himself as one of the pre-eminent painters of Cinquecento Bologna¹⁵. He occupied a key position in the city's artistic and cultural life, one confirmed by Paleotti's electing him as advisor for the *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profano* and the known friendship between the two¹⁶. He also stood as head of the painter's guild at least five times and hence enjoyed a substantial reputation in his native city¹⁷. This standing made him an obvious choice as a master for aspiring painters in Bologna, such as Ludovico and Agostino Carracci, Denis Calvaert, Lorenzo Sabbatini, Orazio Sammachini, who all studied or worked for him at some point in their careers¹⁸.

Prospero Fontana, a man of ambition, integrated himself closely with Bolognese intellectual society (to include the higher clergy and members of the nobility) and catered to their artistic needs¹⁹. Not only did he paint altarpieces, private devotional works and portraits, but he had a deep knowledge of emblemature and *imprese* as well, and thus was well-suited to frescoing palaces with symbolic grottesquery, or producing illustrations for emblem books²⁰. In 1539 Prospero married Antonia de Bonardis, the sister of Peregrino Bonardis,

¹⁵The most comprehensive survey of Prospero's career is still V. Fortunati Pietrantonio "Prospero Fontana" in V. Fortunati Pietrantonio, ed., *Pittura Bolognese del'500* (Bologna, 1986), I pp. 339-414.

¹⁶Paolo Prodi, (*Rome*, 1967), vol II, p. 532.

¹⁷*Massari della Compagnia dei Bombassari, 1575-1600*, BCB, B2444. Prospero served a term in 1575, 1581, 1587 and 1595. Between 1583 and 1585 he was the *Compagnia's* sole head.

¹⁸Carlo Cesare Malvasia "Prospero Fontana" in *Felsina Pittrice* (Bologna, 1678/1969),

¹⁹Prospero and Lavinia's relationship with Bolognese scholars will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, "Painting for the Illustrious Man".

²⁰Best known among his academic patrons for such work, was the humanist Achille Bocchi. Prospero provided drawings for the illustrations of Bocchi's

who ran an important printing house in Bologna²¹. He used her dowry of three hundred scudi to decorate and enlarge a house that he had bought on the Via Galliera, which fast became one of Bologna's most fashionable addresses²². According to Malvasia, this house became a centre for intellectual, cultural and artistic discussion where those with interests in these areas met and were entertained by Prospero. Thus Prospero was the host of a kind of salon, a little republic of learning and the arts in Bologna. In mid sixteenth-century Bologna, the status of the artist was not as elevated as it was in Florence, Rome or Venice; painters still belonged to the same guild as did saddle and sword makers and hence were still considered as artisans²³. Prospero aspired to equality with men of letters, high churchmen, scientists and nobles. Conscious of status, he did not initially train his daughter as a professional painter.

When Lavinia was born in 1552, Prospero did not ask another painter to stand as her godfather (although he would be godfather to Bagnacavallo Jr.'s son Ulisse in 1555)²⁴. Instead he asked men of elevated rank, who could be influential in his and his daughter's life.

Symbolicarum quaestionum, published in 1555 and he decorated Bocchi's palaces with *Virtues and Deities* in the same year.

²¹Dote di Antonia de Bonardis Notarile Rogiti di Ser Pietro Zanettini, Filza 20. N.219, Archivio Notarile, ASB.

²²Romeo Galli (*Imola*, 1940), p.12. Antonia's three hundred scudi came in the form of a house on the Via de' Vinacciuoli. In his will, Prospero apparently states that he sold the house to grandify the one he already possessed on Via Galliera. Galli found the will, dated March 14, 1593 in the records of the notary Paolo da Tossignano alias de Curialtis in Bologna in the Archivio di Stato. However Tossignano's records have since been lost.

²³Charles Dempsey, "Some Observations on the Education of Artists in Florence and Bologna during the Later Sixteenth Century", *Art Bulletin*, 1980, pp.553-569.

²⁴See Fortunati-Pietrantonio, "Prospero Fontana", (*Bologna*, 1986), I, p.345. For the significance and choice of godparents, see Chapter 3 of this thesis, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone".

Agostino Hercolani and Andrea Bonfiglioli, both members of noble families with houses on Via Galliera stood as sponsors to the baby on August 24 1552, when she was baptised at S. Pietro²⁵. The choice of the name Lavinia is worthy of note. It was fashionable for the upper classes to give their children names of Roman origin, probably to distinguish them from lower class children who were more usually given names of Christian origin. Lavinia, the name of the Roman matron who died to defend her chastity, was a popular name among the upper classes in sixteenth-century Italy²⁶. It was the name that Titian gave to his youngest daughter, who was born in 1530, the time when Titian visited Bologna and so impressed the Emperor Charles V. Prospero may have consciously copied the artist whose success and rise in status were envied by every painter in Italy, by giving his youngest daughter the same name.

Lavinia had an elder sister, Emilia, who was probably about ten years older. Emilia was married in 1563 to Floriano Bertelli, the son of a rich merchant, and given a dowry of six hundred scudi, - double that of her mother, and a substantial sum for a commoner. There was clearly no question of Emilia earning her living as a painter. Emilia, however, died in 1568 and her dowry was returned to her father²⁷. Lavinia was about sixteen at the time of her sister's death. In such circumstances, it was usual for the dead girl's dowry to pass to the

²⁵ Lavinia's birth certificate reads; *Lavinia filia D. Prospero Fontane pictoris bap.(a) ut supra Comp. Mag. (s) Eques D. Augustinus Herculanus et Andreas Bonfigolus*. It is part of the *Documenti relativi a Lavinia Fontana*, BCI. Published in Galli (*Imola*, 1940), p.107, Cantaro (*Milan*, 1989), p.302.

²⁶The name Lavinia appears quite frequently in P.S. Dolfi, *Cronologia delle famiglie nobile Bolognesi* (Bologna, 1770, reprinted, 1990).

²⁷Absolutio de Prosperi de Fontanis, 1 May, 1568. Rogito di Alessandro Chiocca, Archivio Notarile 6/2, ASB. Galli found a reference to this document in Gualandi, B 2379, BCB. He did not read the document for himself, as he assumed that Emilia and Floriano married that year and that Emilia died some time between 1568 and 1577 when Lavinia is described as Prospero's "only daughter", discussed below.

sister and for the sister to marry quite quickly. By sixteen she was certainly of marriageable age. Yet in 1568 there was no wedding for Lavinia.

While Prospero's lifestyle may have bought him elevated status and considerable respect amongst the Bolognese intelligentsia, it strained his personal finances. Painters did not generally have the kind of income to entertain men of distinction on the scale he adopted. In the 1560s, in order to generate more income, Prospero began to take on more work outside Bologna working for other painters. He worked for Vasari in the early 1560s frescoing grotesques at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Around 1566 he travelled to Fontainebleau to work for Primaticcio, although ill-health drove him back to Bologna²⁸. How long this illness persisted is not known, but it reduced his capacity to seek commissions outside Bologna. During workless periods, an artist and his family had to cut into its assets and the re-assumption of Emilia's dowry in 1568 may have helped the family over a crisis. By this time, Prospero was nearly sixty, an old man by the standards of the time, who could only look forward to a future in which his earning power was reduced. By the late 1560s, economic imperatives seem to have prompted a re-ordering of the Fontana family strategy. In this re-ordering, a professional artistic career for the remaining daughter became a family goal.

Prospero was actually in residence in Bologna during this period and it may have been the first time that he realised his younger daughter's artistic potential. It may also have been at this point that the sixteen year old Lavinia actually declared a positive interest in becoming a painter herself. It seems unlikely that Lavinia did not receive some kind of artistic training as she was growing up. Traditionally, drawing and painting lessons were a part of the

²⁸Fortunati Pietrantonio, "Prospero Fontana" (*Bologna, 1986*), I, pp.345-347.

education of a well-to-do young woman²⁹. Without a doubt, the young Lavinia was already an accomplished amateur. In a situation where her family needed money, her own ambitions and predilections may have combined with their interests to turn her into a professional painter.

There were models to hand. Sofonisba Anguissola and Barbara Longhi had already garnered reputations for themselves in Italy, although in circumstances not fully analogous to Lavinia's own. Anguissola was a noble woman, as much lady-in-waiting as painter and the Spanish court was a very different world from that of Bologna, where the market forces of the city prevailed. While Barbara Longhi's situation might have been closer to that of Lavinia's, Ravenna was much smaller and more provincial than Bologna, Longhi's audience less sophisticated than the better educated Bolognese, their tastes simpler and perhaps easier to please.

There was also the example of a woman painter much closer to home, in whose training Prospero may have played a part, Samaritana Samaritani³⁰. All that is known about this woman's life is to be found in Alessandro Machiavelli's manuscript on illustrious Bolognese women and Gaetano Giordano's very brief study of her. She was apparently a woman of scholarly and artistic leanings who belonged to the intellectual circles surrounding Carlo Borromeo that moved between Milan, Bologna and Rome in the 1560s³¹. As well as

²⁹Laurie Rubin, "First Draft Artistry: Children's Drawings in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" in *Children of Mercury, the Education of Artists in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Providence, 1984), pp 10-19.

³⁰Information on Samaritana Samaritani is taken from Alessandro Machiavelli, *Delle Donne Bolognesi per letteratura e disegni illustri* (c. 1740), B 13331 BCB and Gaetano Giordani, *Rimembranze di Samaritana Samaritani* (Bologna, 1836).

³¹Giordano (*Bologna, 1836*), p.12.

painting (and like other academic Bolognese women before her), she wrote orations and perhaps religious poetry. Giordano states that she presented Borromeo with his portrait and speculates that she produced small devotional paintings for associates within these intellectual academic circles.

Samaritani was supposedly a protégée of Cardinal Francesco Alciati and his cousin and mentor, Andrea Alciati, the famous Professor of Law and emblem book writer. The Cardinal apparently gave an oration at the opening of Prospero's Academy and Machiavelli asserted that Samaritani knew Prospero through the Alciati. Bologna was, after all, a small city in which noteworthies knew each other and Prospero's house was a meeting point of the learned. Samaritani may have studied with Prospero, but certainly her example would have given Prospero insight into how a woman with artistic skills could enter into such circles of power and be accepted. Samaritani may have been from an old established, well-off Bolognese family and thus without the need to earn a living, but that did not preclude another well-placed young woman from making a financial profit. Prospero must have realised that his own connections could help his daughter to become an established painter.

How Lavinia learnt to paint professionally and whether her father taught her himself are matters on which one can only speculate. If she had had some drawing and painting lessons as a part of her early education, such classes were not necessarily given to her by him, considering that he was often absent from Bologna, or preoccupied with his own commissions in the city. Perhaps one of her teachers was her father's collaborator Orazio Sammachini, since some of her early work shows his influence. She may have acquired the habit of sketching members of her household early on in life - making drawings of the heads of the subjects she painted was to be an integral part of her artistic process. One can also infer she had lessons in mathematics, geometry in particular, as her early works demonstrate

that she had already grasped the rudiments of perspective.

Prospero might not have actually needed to teach Lavinia directly many of the rudiments of artistic practise. His workshop was most likely part of the house she lived in, she had the opportunity to watch how a canvas or a panel was prepared, how a drawing was squared for transfer, how colours were mixed. She could have picked up these skills herself without much guidance. One area in which her artistic training was clearly defective was that of anatomical drawing. While she painted beautifully modelled individual limbs, she often demonstrated some difficulty in producing an entirely coherent expression of the relationship between the body parts of the figures she depicted³². To draw naked bodies from life was probably considered inappropriate: that a young woman should be allowed to study anatomy would have caused a scandal, and if such a breach of decorum had ever been made public it might have jeopardised her burgeoning career or brought Prospero into disrepute. That Lavinia should be deficient in this area of expertise may not have been so important for Prospero. He needed her to produce aesthetically pleasing, commercially viable pictures as soon as possible. Such works did not have to be technically very ambitious to generate income.

Lavinia's early works must have been sold by her father to his own patrons or presented to them as gifts in the expectation that they would promote her work or commission further pictures. She emphasised her status as her father's daughter by signing some of her pictures *Lavinia Prospero Fontana Filia*. There are seven known extant signed pictures

³²The painting that best illustrates this problem is the *Visit by the Queen of Sheba to Solomon* of circa 1599 (Dublin, National Gallery), where it is apparent the heads and bodies of the ladies-in-waiting have been painted at different times. This picture is discussed in Chapter Three, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone".

painted by Lavinia before she was twenty five (after which her signature changes)³³. Of these remaining works, all but one is a small scale devotional painting, intended for private use, but that one, the "portrait of a small boy holding a carnation" (whereabouts unknown) is the first precisely dated work (figure 2). It is signed *LAVINIA PROSPERI FONTANE/FILIA VIRGO FACIEBAT MDLXXV*. The child, aged about seven, is most likely the son of one of Prospero's acquaintances, a scholar, or a nobleman. Within the context of the development of Lavinia's technique this picture is interesting as it shows how Lavinia was prepared to adapt a number of models to create her own portrait style. On one level, she looked to Bologna's leading portraitist of the time, Bartolomeo Passerotti, in order to observe correct pose and form, but looked beyond Bologna to give the picture a warmth and intimacy lacking in Passerotti's work. Cantaro and Fortunati-Pietrantonio see Lavinia in this picture looking to the Florentine Alessandro Allori, Anguissola and northern models, such as Katherine van Hemessen³⁴. Flemish influence is apparent in her capturing of the sheen of the silk of the

³³Lavinia's signature changes when she gets married in 1577, the circumstances of which are discussed below. The pictures that bear her maiden name are *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine in the presence of Sts. Joseph, Infant John the Baptist and St. Francis* (New York, private collection), *The Infant St. John the Baptist in a landscape* (whereabouts unknown), *Portrait of a small boy with a carnation* (whereabouts unknown), *Holy Family with Infant St. John the Baptist and St. Elizabeth* (Dresden, Gemäldegalerie), *The Annunciation* (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery), *Christ and the Canaanite Woman* (Venice, private collection), *Christ and the Symbols of the Passion* (El Paso, Museum of Art). Cantaro ascribes three other unsigned pictures to Lavinia's earliest years, *Holy Family with St. John the Baptist and St. Catherine* (Bologna, Museo della Chiesa di San Giuseppe), *Adoration of the Shepherds* (Imola, Pinacoteca Civica) and *Nocturnal Nativity* (Imola, Pinacoteca Civica). Of these the first is stylistically very close to a *The Holy Family with Sts. Francis and Margaret* (Wellesley College) signed and dated 1579 by Lavinia and may date from the years after her marriage, the second is closer to Prospero Fontana's style (but may be the result of a collaboration between them) and the third bears much greater similarity to the work of Bartolomeo Cesi or Ercole Procaccini.

³⁴Fortunati-Pietrantonio, (*Bologna, 1986*) II, p.727, p.739. Cantaro, (*Milan, 1989*), p.63.

boy's sleeves and the technique may have been learnt from Denis Calvaert, who had been an early pupil of her father, and an expert at the rendering of silk or satin textiles, either directly or by looking at his pictures. However, the glowing orange of the jerkin, and the pink of the boy's cheeks have much in common with Venetian portraiture models such as Titian or Lotto. Lorenzo Sabbatini, another associate of Prospero, evidently made a large part of his living producing copies of paintings by Titian and other renowned artists, so Lavinia could have had known what Venetian painting looked like, even without direct contact with these painters and their works³⁵.

Lavinia probably painted other small children of a similar background to this little boy during this period in her career, but these paintings were outnumbered by her activity in producing small devotional paintings³⁶. The small size of these paintings would have been easier for an inexperienced painter to handle. Moreover the choice of this genre accorded with market demand in 1570s Bologna, where property inventories indicate the overwhelming preponderance of paintings of the Holy Family and related subject matter over any other kind of picture in Bolognese homes. These works also indicate that Lavinia was already using different kinds of support, three are on canvas, two are on wooden panel and two are on copper. Copper was the support usually used for painting miniature portraits and in the late sixteenth-century was used increasingly for small religious paintings, having been popularised

³⁵ For example, the *Inventari dei Beni di Tomasso Gozzadini* from January 29, 1587, *Istrumenti* 31, vol 172, Archivio Gozzadini, BCB, (an inventory unusual in that it gives the names of the artists of the pictures he possessed) states that he owned both a St. Jerome by Titian as well as a "*Quadro di S. Maddalena chi viene da Tiziano, di mano di M. Lorenzo*". Also listed are "*Un quadro di una Maddalena chi viene dal Correggio di mano di Lorenzo*".

³⁶ For more on such works see Chapter 6, "Putti, Pictures and Pedagogy".

by painters such as Marcello Venusti in Rome. A relatively expensive material, its use would have increased the price of a picture. That Lavinia used it at this time is a pointer to the wealth of her patrons; they were able to afford such a luxury item, or the Fontanas saw the presentation of such a gift as a good investment and a means to further commissions.

Lavinia could draw on the experience of her father and his associates in producing commercially attractive devotional pictures. Prospero frequently executed similar works; two well known examples are depictions of "The Holy Family and St. Jerome with a female martyr" (Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria and Bowes Collection, England). His colleagues Lorenzo Sabbatini, Orazio Sammachini and Denis Calvaert were also considerable producers of such small devotional pictures. Lavinia responded to some of the same stylistic influences as they did, for example the airy, delicate quality that Correggio employed in this type of picture, such as in the "Madonna of the yarn winder" (London, National Gallery) or the "Madonna and Child" (Florence, Uffizi). She also used some of the same Giulio Romano motifs that both she and her father may have learnt from Marcantonio Raimondi prints, such as the twisting pose of the infant John the Baptist (such as in her "Holy Family with St. John and St. Elizabeth", Dresden, Gemäldegalerie) or the inclusion of an antique sarcophagus as cradle/tomb ("Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine with the Holy Family and St. Francis", New York, private coll, figure 3).

Yet Lavinia, even in her earliest works, was never a slavish imitator of her father's style. Clearly, from the start of what can be considered to be her professional career, she looked beyond those painters who had influenced him to find her own sources of inspiration. She had a far greater interest in creating narratives within her pictures than did her father. The latter spent much of his career producing emblems and grotesques, figural or otherwise, intellectual and coded images in which form and pose superseded any emphasis on a picture's

emotive or story-telling qualities. On many occasions, such habits affected his easel painting. His daughter, on the other hand, was much more a child of the Counter-Reformation, someone who from adolescence had heard Bishop Paleotti give sermons (or perhaps discourse on the matter in her own house) on the importance of religious painting in the formation of the Christian. Hence her development as a painter was co-existent with the perception that the mission of religious painting was to teach and move the viewers to closer proximity to God. Whatever the technical imperfections of Lavinia's early work, her pictures can never be described as devoid of emotion and spiritual content. Furthermore, their commitment to religious orthodoxy is impeccable.

If Lavinia received little formal instruction in the art of composition, she nonetheless demonstrated an inherent grasp of ways of building a narrative background to these religious pictures. There are few extant religious pictures by her in which the figures are set against a flat undifferentiated background. Early on, she exhibits an interest in landscape and architectural backgrounds. On one side of the *Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine*, the figures are set against a leafy slope, rising behind St. Joseph. The picture's vanishing point is extended up to the point where a flat plain ends in a distant haze of hills, replicating the countryside around Bologna. Compositionally, Lavinia provides counterpoints on each side of the picture: a slope to a plain, St. Joseph to St. Francis, a kneeling St. John the Baptist to a kneeling St. Catherine, an instrument of death, Catherine's wheel (upon which Lavinia signed her name), on the right, to a resting place for the dead, the sarcophagus, on the left. The curve of the wheel also balances the diagonal of the beam supporting what would be intended to represent the Holy Family's stable in the top left hand corner. Tiny though the painting is (24 x 17.5 cms.), it functions effectively as devotional theatre: St. John the Baptist turns around to face and make eye contact with the viewer, pointing at the group behind him

to draw that spectator in to watch (and emulate) the absorption of the others in the Christ Child, who uses both his little hands to put the ring on Catherine's finger.

Already Lavinia's chromatic palette has diverged strikingly from that of her father. Whereas he tended to favour acidic oranges and shocking pinks, she uses in this picture soft green and blue hues, subtly blending with the backdrop of the landscape. One sees, as in the work of almost every sixteenth-century Bolognese painter, the influence of Parmigianino over Lavinia in this work - particularly in the heads of John the Baptist and St. Catherine. However, she also shows herself here to be one of the first Bolognese painters to reflect and adapt the sweetness and softness of Barocci, another painter whose work was accessible in Bologna through prints and who can be considered to be the first Italian painter stylistically to reflect Counter-Reformation ideals in painting.

The other small copper painting still in existence from Lavinia's early *oeuvre* is the "Annunciation" (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, 36 x 27 cms., fig.4) The picture is compositionally simple; the Angel Gabriel and Mary stand a little way back in a very plain domestic interior. But narrative devices are employed to bring the scene to life. Lavinia paints Gabriel walking through the doorway of Mary's house. His sash is still half outside, fluttering in a breeze. One knee is bent and a foot is raised, denoting movement towards Mary. It is not a pose used for rhetorical effect. It is a human, not a divine, way for the angel to arrive, in contrast to the frequent depictions where he descends on a cloud bank. That Mary is startled by this apparition is indicated by the book lying on the floor, its pages still fluttering, as if she had dropped it while rising from her chair (whose high back corresponds with the shape of the door through which Gabriel enters). Mary's simple *contadina* style dress contrasts with Gabriel's glittering costume; her downcast eyes and humble gesture, her hands crossed upon her breast, are juxtaposed with Gabriel's swooping

gesture, as he bids her without words, to look upwards as the Holy Spirit descends.

The "Annunciation" shows Lavinia to be familiar with what was undoubtedly the greatest painting in Bologna, Raphael's "St. Cecilia" altarpiece in S. Giovanni in Monte. It perhaps would have been surprising had she not been so. She must have studied the costumes that Cecilia and her companions wore, as Gabriel's dress is a direct reworking of the kind of theatrical stylised Roman garb devised by Raphael. Lavinia was to use derivations of this type of costume throughout her working life whenever she wished to portray an "exotic" character³⁷.

Her most sophisticated and largest (1.23 m x 0.93 m.) painting before 1577 is undoubtedly "Christ and the Canaanite woman" (Venice, private collection, fig.5). Compositionally it is reminiscent of Barocci, in particular the almost "airy" grouping of the disciples around Christ. The brightness of the colours, especially the blues and pinks could well be adapted from Florentines looking to Bronzino or Pontormo. The faces of the figures in the foreground reveal the same delicate brushstrokes as the two pictures discussed above, but Lavinia's handling of the figures has now become much more confident and assured. The Canaanite woman makes a similar hand gesture to Mary's in the *Annunciation*, indicating humility. Anatomically she is a much more sophisticated figure than is Mary. She kneels and it is possible too see that the muscle of her neck extended towards Christ has been very carefully modelled. Lavinia soon employed elaborate hand gestures (doubtless copied from contemporary rhetoric manuals) to help create narratives within pictures and the gestures of

³⁷Lavinia uses adaptations of Raphael's costume for St. Cecilia for her Queen Louise of Savoy in *St. Francis di Paolo blessing the Infant Francis I* (Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale) and for a figure in the *Sacrifice of a Bull* (Imola, Pinacoteca Civica).

Christ and His disciples create a discourse³⁸. Also of interest in this picture is the way in which the artist has begun to experiment with the treatment of light to add to the narrative effect. A mottled sky is visible in the background, changing from a dark brown, to a paler blue and finally to a pinpoint of yellow light painted at the picture's vanishing point. Such a sky suggests a breaking horizon, indicative of dawn or nightfall.

Cantaro suggests that this painting is the same "Christ and the Canaanite Woman" bought on August 19, 1579 by Cardinal Ferdinand de' Medici for his Roman villa and until recently, believed to be lost³⁹. There are a number of reasons to support her view. As she points out, the date of execution of the picture (using, as it does, the signature from Lavinia's earliest years, *Lavinia Prospero Fontana Filia*) pre-dates its time of acquisition by the Cardinal by only a couple of years and thus suggests a direct commission from him. But one can go further than does Cantaro. The background of the painting has a number of indications to suggest a representation of a Medicean Rome, that is to say a Rome so presented as to highlight particular Medici possessions. While it is not an exact copy of the Villa Medici (today the French Academy, near the Spanish steps), the stone staircase is similar to that of the Villa, and the stone sphere on the balustrade is exactly like those decorating both that Villa and early designs for the Villa Madama (the original Medici Villa just North of Rome) representative of Medici *palle*⁴⁰. The city-scape in the background, with river and domed

³⁸See the hand gestures in John Bulwer, *Chirologia; or the natural language of the hand* (c. 1648-1654, reprinted Carbondale Illinois, 1974, Ed. James W. Cleary).

³⁹Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.69.

In oral communication.

⁴⁰Henry D. Fernández connected the background of this painting to the architecture and topography of aspects of the Rome of the Medici. John Shearman in "A Functional Interpretation of Villa Madama", *Romisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* vol 20, 1983, provides a drawing by Raphael of what is probably an early design for an elevation of the Villa Madama (Oxford Ashmolean Museum, no 579, *recto*), in

buildings on a hill is reminiscent of Rome. The vista looks down onto where the Villa Madama, the original Medici villa, was situated just north of the city's walls, half-way up the Monte Mario, looking down onto the Milvian bridge⁴¹.

This picture constitutes a significant landmark in Lavinia Fontana's early career. It demonstrates that word of her reputation as a painter had reached beyond Bologna to Rome, where doubtless Bolognese intermediaries were working on her behalf. Probably Cardinal de' Medici was intrigued when he learnt about the existence of this young woman painter and desired to see what her art could show. Perhaps instructions were sent to Bologna about what she was to paint. The subject matter is, as Cantaro points out, unusual. It demands a demonstration of devotion to Christ by a woman (as in a *Noli me tangere*) within an extensive group setting and the whole is executed against a background of "Medicean" overtones.

Lavinia may have been given other "test-piece" commissions from collectors of the same standing as Cardinal Ferdinand de' Medici at this time. They would have been requested from her through an intermediary who knew both parties. While ultimately, such commissions could lead to Lavinia's advancement and promotion, they would not have provided large amounts of ready cash in the here and now. What Lavinia needed was to build up a strong and steady business relationship with Bolognese citizens, to turn them into loyal clients and hence to be able to fulfill their artistic desiderata: portraits, sacred or profane

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which the balustrade is decorated with *palle*. For the *palle* on the Villa Medici, see David Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton, 1979), p.224.

⁴¹At the time Lavinia would have painted this picture, the Villa Madama was a favourite residence of Ugo and Jacopo Boncompagni, Pope Gregory XIII and his son. Coffin, *ut supra*, p.257. Lavinia's relationship with the Boncompagni will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

pictures whether for public or private consumption.

The remaining early works of Lavinia Fontana attest to growing competence and widening contacts, but her single status, particularly as her father advanced in years, threatened to be a limiting factor. To exploit her capabilities to the full, in particular as a portraitist, she needed to be able to liaise with clients on a one to one basis, so as to discuss with scholars or the nobility what they wanted their portraits to demonstrate and to be able to explore the physiognomy of a man's face without being accused of immodesty. The Fontana family would know from the example of Properzia de Rossi what could happen to a woman artist without a reputation, or the protection that could be derived from a husband⁴². There may have been potential patrons who were deterred from employing Lavinia due to her unmarried state. There was also the question of the negotiation of credit and the tricky financial business which could only be done by a man since women were legally debarred from such negotiations. Prospero could not accompany or supervise Lavinia for the rest of her life. To maintain her reputation, expand her business and thus climb the next rung of the ladder of success, Lavinia needed a husband.

Lavinia's need for a husband was subject to specific requirements that were unusual, indeed unheard of, for the times. Marriage was the occasion upon which a bride's family parted with ready cash or land as a dowry obligatory under canon law. These resources were destined to support her through marriage and keep her in widowhood. The husband then took his bride into his family's house. Prospero either did not want to give, or was not capable of giving the kind of substantial sum needful to attract a man of good social or financial standing as a husband. Secondly, Prospero did not want, or could not afford to have,

⁴²See the introduction for references to Properzia's life.

Lavinia leave his house, lest a source of revenue left with her. What was desirable was a husband satisfied to have a career painter for a wife without monetary backing from her family, who would come and live at Prospero's house and who would at the same time afford Lavinia a measure of status and respectability. That such a husband was found who suited the Fontana needs is quite remarkable.

Lavinia Fontana's marriage differs greatly from those of two of her counterparts, Anguissola and Gentileschi. Sofonisba Anguissola's first marriage, made when she was nearing forty (1572) was arranged by Philip II of Spain to a member of a prestigious Sicilian/Spanish noble family with a dowry of three thousand ducats given by Elizabeth de Valois⁴³. Anguissola's second marriage eight years later, made of her own choosing, was to a Genoese naval merchant who reputedly was much younger than she⁴⁴. Gentileschi's hasty marriage, following the rape trial of Agostino Tassi, to Pietro Stiattesi was made to cover up her besmirched reputation. Stiattesi used her name to borrow money, got into debt and the couple drifted apart⁴⁵. Lavinia's own marriage was a successful negotiation without the transference of large sums of money and the two would be companions until death severed them. The circumstances of the match and what they reveal about Lavinia and Prospero and

⁴³Elisabeth de Valois left Anguissola three thousand ducats in her will to go towards her dowry in 1568, but she did not marry Fabrizio Moncada until 1573. Gregori ed., *ut supra*, "Regesto dei Documenti" p.375, 378.

⁴⁴Moncada died in April of 1578 *ut supra*, p.383. By December of 1579 Anguissola had already made up her mind to marry Orazio Lomellino whom she had met in Pisa, as Francis I de Medici was intervening on Philip II's behalf to try to dissuade her from the marriage and go back to Spain, *ut supra* p.385. Lomellino's youth may well be a fiction as it ties in with a notion of a recently widowed older woman having a "whirlwind" romance with a younger man.

⁴⁵Elizabeth Cropper "New documents for Artemisia Gentileschi's life in Florence" *Burlington Magazine*, CXXXV, 1088, November, 1993, pp.760-761.

her life are very interesting indeed.

Prospero employed a traditional method of finding a husband for Lavinia: he asked around among his friends and acquaintances if they knew of any young men who would make his daughter a suitable spouse. Among his friends was Vincenzo Ghini, a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Bologna. Vincenzo's father was Luca Ghini, the most celebrated botanist in Europe in his day⁴⁶. Luca was originally from Imola about twenty miles from Bologna and the Ghini had kept their ties with this small town.

While Imola was small, it was set in fertile farmland and therefore wealthy. It also occupied an important political position in Emilia Romagna where it had played a part in the Sforza wars and in Cesare Borgia's machinations to take over the Romagna⁴⁷. Its leading family was the Alidosi, who were heavily involved in Bolognese politics, intermarried with the Bolognese nobility and who will appear in a later chapter⁴⁸. On a lower rung from the Alidosi, but nonetheless important within Imola, was the Zappi family. The latter had held senatorial and judicial posts in the city since the thirteenth-century and by the late sixteenth, were a large family with several branches⁴⁹. One of the Zappi family members with whom the Ghini were acquainted was Severo Zappi. Biasi describes Severo as serving as a Senator, holding the office of *Conservatore* (local Magistrate) for Imola, and acting as Imolese

⁴⁶Galli (*Imola, 1940*), p.17.

⁴⁷See relevant chapters in Ernst Breisach, *Caterina Sforza, a Renaissance Virago* (Chicago, 1967).

⁴⁸See section on Costanza Alidosi Isolani in Chapter 3, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone".

⁴⁹N.H. Alberto Biasi, *Genealogia e cronistoria di una famiglia Imolese: gli Zappi*, (Imola, 1961).

Ambassador at the *Presidenza di Romagna*⁵⁰.

Severo Zappi may have been a man of influence in his town, but he did not belong to the senior branch of the Zappi family and does not seem to have been a man of great wealth. He had three sons to provide for. The youngest of them was Gian Paolo⁵¹. Italian noble families did not opt for partible inheritance but still sought to secure clerical or other posts for their sons. As the youngest son, Gian Paolo would have to wait for some kind of opening.

The young Gian Paolo does not seem to have had the taste for the church or a military career (although he may well have been interested in the arts). As far as one can tell he remained at his father's house without doing anything in particular. Seemingly without a great deal of money or prospects, his choice of wife was limited, which is probably why, when learning of Lavinia's existence from Vincenzo Ghini, Severo Zappi was willing to consider this rather unorthodox young woman as a potential daughter-in-law. For the Fontanas, the possibility of catching a young man of minor nobility from a neighbouring town was the opportunity they had awaited.

The small collection of documents pertaining to Lavinia's life kept at the Biblioteca Comunale at Imola contains the letters and contracts which detail the circumstances of the marriage between herself and Gian Paolo. Severo Zappi travelled to Bologna and met with Lavinia and Prospero on the evening of February 13, 1577. He wrote to his wife, Gentile

⁵⁰Biasi (*Imola, 1961*), p.27, note 3.

⁵¹The Zappi family tree in the appendix of Biasi indicates that Gian Paolo's two elder brothers were called Bartolomeo and Giustiniano. He had two sisters, Giulia and Lucrezia, who married a Ruggero di Baldassare Fontana in 1532, whom Biasi mistakenly assumed to be Lavinia's brother, (*Imola, 1961*), p.28 .

Bommercati, and Gian Paolo, that same night⁵². This letter reveals much about Lavinia, her personality and how she was viewed by others. Severo explains to his family that he has had the "*bona informazione*" that had been communicated to him by Vincenzo Ghini about Lavinia confirmed by Orazio Sammachini, the painter, whom the Fontana must have asked to provide a testimonial of Lavinia's good character⁵³. Sammachini had told Severo that if Lavinia lives for a few more years, she is more than likely to "make a great profit in painting"⁵⁴. That such ability is clearly important to Severo confirms that he was unable to bestow much money on his son and ready to receive future wealth rather than actual cash in hand arrangement. Sammachini has also described Lavinia as "god-fearing", as having lived an honourable life (i.e. that she is indeed the *Filia Virgo* which she describes herself as in her paintings), well-mannered and gifted (suggesting she has talents beyond those of painting)⁵⁵. Severo has been assured that whoever takes her as a wife will be more delighted with her every day and will enjoy the greatest satisfaction from her company⁵⁶. His comments on Lavinia's looks are that she is neither beautiful nor ugly but somewhere between the two⁵⁷. Describing a young woman as plain, might, in twentieth-century eyes, seem

⁵²This letter is published in Galli (*Imola, 1940*), pp.107-109 and Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.302.

⁵³"*La bona informazione avuta da m/Vinc.o al qual so poterli credere sono stato informato da altri in particolare da M. Horatio Samachino..*"

⁵⁴"*..se ella vive qualche Anni avere a fare gran profito nella pitura..*"

⁵⁵"*..timorata di Dio e di onestissima vita e di belli costumi essere dotata di virtu..*"

⁵⁶"*Asicurandomi che ogni giorno navero più consolacione e chi lavera a godere satisfacione granda*".

⁵⁷"*E quanto alla bellezza essere a ponto come deve esere le done cioe non bella ne bruta ma che tiene la via del meggio.*"

somewhat unflattering, but in the sixteenth-century, the ideal wife was supposed to be neither *bella ni brutta* so that she was neither vain or flirtatious through her looks, on the one hand, nor unbearable to behold on the other⁵⁸.

Severo asks his wife to call on Gian Paolo's elder brother, Bartolomeo and to tell him that he need search no longer for a bride for his younger brother and he reminds her that he has always felt that the young women of Imola were lacking in "something"⁵⁹. But in Bologna, Severo has found in Lavinia what he believes to be the ideal wife for Gian Paolo and has immediately begun to negotiate the marriage contract⁶⁰. As Vincenzo Ghini is giving a lunch the following morning for Lavinia, Severo suggests that it would be a good idea for Gian Paolo to come over to Bologna where he will be able to see his bride and he promises his son no small amount of satisfaction⁶¹. He then adds a postscript in which he says that it has given him pleasure to see Lavinia write the following words, which are more those of "a judicious man than a woman"⁶².

⁵⁸ The Bolognese nobleman and sometime man-of-letters Pompeo Vizzani, *Breve Trattato del Governo Familiare* (Bologna, 1609) makes these recommendations for a bride's looks in the section "Della elettione della Consorte".

⁵⁹ "Consorte Car.ma vi piacerà chiamar Bart.o e, dirli non se doglia si o dato p.a molie a Gio. Paolo e , come da me non e, manchato di cerchare come sapete tutte le giovane della nostra cita pare nostre ancora uno pocho da manche.." Ut supra, note 52.

⁶⁰ "...a Bologna in soma diteli a nome mio atenda a eser savio e che spera in Dio che li provedera anchora a luj di qualche cosa. fate le solite recomandacione et state sana.nante abia finita la littera sono andato vedere la sposa et finischo la littera a la presencja sua la quale mi satisfa asai esendo come voliono essere le done non bella ne bruta potra comparire fra l'altre e sopra il tutto e dottata di molte virtu.."

⁶¹ "Perche domattina m. Vic.o Ghini vol dare mangiare alla sposa sera bene che Gio. Paolo se ne venga a bon hora acio ello ariva nante desinare dove vedera la sua sposa con non pocha satisfacione.."

⁶² "Di tanto più mi e stato consolacione avendo visto fare di sua mano le qui sotto scrite parole quale sono de homo iudicioso e non da dona".

Lavinia's message to her future mother-in-law tells that lady how pleased she is that God has seen to grant her as loving and kind a father-in-law as Severo, as honourable a mother-in-law as Gentile herself and as virtuous a husband as Gian Paolo. She cannot content herself with these few words, but plans to visit and embrace them and she hopes that her new family will accept her as the obedient and loving daughter that she will be⁶³. Romeo Galli felt that Severo's remarks about Lavinia's writing style were not very flattering, since they imply that Lavinia was tough, masculine, certainly unwomanly. But Severo Zappi would have meant no offence to his future daughter-in-law. He was obviously impressed by the fact that this young woman knew the correct way to address a family whom she had never met. She is polite, diplomatic and respectful, not a coy, blushing bride (she was after all, twenty four years old, not a young bride by the standards of the day). Furthermore, while these words were written in the context of Lavinia's personal, rather than professional life, they give a sense, one that Severo Zappi no doubt recognised, of her abilities to negotiate with clients. Within this brief message, without being obsequious, she contrives to be very respectful, and to flatter and honour her new relatives.

Severo also mentions to his wife that he has been given two portraits by Lavinia (that is self-portraits), which he tells Gentile she will see for herself on his return⁶⁴. It is generally agreed that one of these pictures must have been Lavinia's "Self-portrait at the clavichord

⁶³"Poi che al Sig.^r Dio e piaciuto di Auentuarmi d'un tanto Amorevole e gentilissimo Padre quale e il Sig. Seviere e il simile d'una tale honoratiss.^a Madre quale e V.S. e di un tanto Virtuosissimo sposo quale e il sig.^r Gioan Paolo non ho potuto contenermi con queste poche parole al presente visitar V.S. e insieme basciarli come e mio debito le mani pregandola mi vogli accettare per quella hubbidente e amorevole figliuola quale io li sero.."

⁶⁴"O presso di me dui soi ritratto fati di sua mano quali mi piaciono asai come vedrete a mia venuta.."

with a maid-servant" now in the Accademia di San Luca (fig. 6)⁶⁵. The size of the picture (27 x 24 cms.) would make it easy to transport it back to Imola. Both the portrait was painted and the wedding plans were arranged in 1577. Lavinia's portrait at the clavichord is usually placed within the context of self-portraits by other women artists, who portrayed themselves in a similar manner⁶⁶. The one extant picture of Marietta Tintoretto (Florence, Vasari Corridor) portrays the Venetian woman (also famed for her musical ability) standing in front of a clavichord. There is a similar work by the Flemish Katherine Van Hemessen (Cologne, Wallraf-Richardt Museum - although whether or not it is a self-portrait is open to dispute). A favoured pose of Sofonisba Anguissola was to be seated at the clavichord. Her self-portrait of 1561 shows her at her musical instrument accompanied by a maidservant (Althorp Park, Lord Spencer Collection, fig. 7), and an undated one (Goodwood, Goodwood House), must have had some direct bearing on Lavinia's own work. If Lavinia had never seen these Anguissola portraits, copies or prints of them existed, or else someone who had seen one had described it to Lavinia. It is easy to understand an emulation by Lavinia of the Cremonese painter, whose success would have been envied by painters throughout Italy regardless of their sex. In short, if Sofonisba had a clavichord and a maidservant, Lavinia must have them too. It has been reasoned that by depicting herself in this manner peculiar to women artists, Lavinia was claiming a place within the history of distinguished women artists. While that may have been part of her intent, more was at issue in this portrait since it was designed to

⁶⁵Cantaro (*Milan 1989*), pp.72-74.

⁶⁶Angela Ghirardi "Lavinia Fontana allo specchio. Pittrici e autoritratto nel secondo Cinquecento" in Fortunati Pietrantonio Ed., (*Milan, 1994*), pp.41-43.

play a part in the preparations for her marriage⁶⁷.

One of the reasons why women artists painted themselves playing the clavichord was to underline their accomplishment and breeding. Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier* states that the truly gifted and polished noblewoman should be a skilled musician⁶⁸. In this way, Lavinia, uses the clavichord to underscore statements made to Severo Zappi about her abilities and accomplishments, which Sammarchini indicated were not limited to painting.

Lavinia's inclusion of the maidservant in her portrait could be a response to Anguissola's picture. Employing a servant, especially one who is not simply a kitchen drudge, but who may assist Lavinia at her music adds to the status of Lavinia and her family. The servant indicates that the Fontana family are not merely artisans, they have a staff. There is however one highly significant difference between the Anguissola portrait and that of Fontana, a difference neglected by commentators. It is the background. In Sofonisba's Althorp picture the background is flat and undifferentiated, while the background in Lavinia's portrait embodies a narrative. In an alcove behind her, in front of the window stands an easel placed centrally and a *cassone*. Although no painting rests upon it, indicating that the young artist is now at her leisure, it is an acknowledgement of the centrality of painting in her life and a visual reminder of Orazio Sammarchini's testimonial that Lavinia "will make a great profit from her art". Encoded in this representation is industry, skill and money and a guarantee to the prospective husband and his family that Lavinia is committed to her work. Accomplished as she may be, she still "works hard every day".

It is significant that the easel is put next to a wooden chest, a *cassone*. Such boxes

⁶⁷Without actually interpreting the iconography of the portrait, Ghirardi connects it to Severo's description of Lavinia in his letter back to Imola, *ut supra*, p.181.

⁶⁸Sutherland Harris (*New York/Los Angeles 1976*), pp.24-25, p.106.

were used to transport a bride's trousseau, clothes and jewels, which sometimes comprised the larger part of a woman's fortune⁶⁹. The positioning of the two objects side by side invites the viewer to speculate that Lavinia's future prospects exceed the mere contents of a *cassone*. It is the fruit of the easel and her own labours that will provide Lavinia with her clothes and jewels. The colour of Lavinia's brocaded dress with a train may not be an arbitrary choice. It is red, the most popular colour for wedding dresses in Bologna during the sixteenth-century, and chosen as the most obvious way to give nuptial overtones to the portrait⁷⁰.

The inscription painted on the wall behind the maid-servant helps to decipher the meanings of the portrait and conditions under which the portrait was painted. It reads *Lavinia Virgo Prosperi Fontane/Filia Ex Speculo Imaginem/Oris Sui Expressit Anno/MDLXXVII* ("Lavinia the Virgin Daughter of Prospero Fontana depicted herself from a mirror in the year 1577). Mary Garrard recently interpreted this inscription and others like it, which include the word "virgin" as a feminist assertion by Lavinia that her painterly capabilities had been unsullied by the touch of a man⁷¹. Given that this picture was intended as a marriage portrait such a politicised interpretation is unlikely. Rather does the inscription confirm Severo Zappi's statement that Lavinia has led an *onestissima vita*, her virgin state would be a key factor in the marriage bargain.

⁶⁹See the section on bridal portraiture in Chapter 3 for importance of *cassone*.

⁷⁰ Again, see section in Chapter 3.

⁷¹Mary Garrard "Here's looking at me; Sofonisba Anguissola and the problem of the woman artist", *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, 3, 1994, pp. 580-600. A more plausible suggestion by Garrard is that there is a connection between these clavichord pictures and representations of St. Cecilia, who, by the late sixteenth-century was quite frequently represented playing her instrument, the piped organ. Given the popularity of St. Cecilia in Bologna, Lavinia Fontana may have felt that an association with Cecilian iconography would give her own portrait an added iconic status.

The reference to the mirror in the inscription has recently been interpreted by Ghirardi as a further attempt by Lavinia to contextualise herself within the tradition of women artists.

She cites the precedents of early fifteenth-century French illuminated manuscripts which depict women seated at mirrors painting their image from them, or the case of Anguissola who states on a self-portrait miniature (Boston, MFA) that she has depicted herself from her mirror image⁷². That Lavinia was aware of this tradition cannot be ruled out, but reference to the mirror may also indicate that her representation of herself is an honest one and a true likeness. Her image is one that she has seen before her in a mirror and a mirror cannot lie. The inscription, therefore acts as a testimonial to the messages Severo Zappi sent back to his family in which he emphasised that Lavinia was neither ugly nor beautiful. Lavinia's face is a pleasant one: she is not a ravishing beauty, but she has clear skin, strong features, good posture, an open face, a clear gaze. It is not the face of a woman whose looks would arouse either jealousy or pity, but it is the face of one who would be a good companion. When Severo Zappi's family saw this picture, they would know that he was telling the truth about what he had seen in Lavinia.

The date is the firmest evidence that Lavinia painted her picture within the context of thinking about becoming a bride. Severo Zappi wrote his letter home from Bologna on February 13, 1577 - the Zappis and Fontanas would have known about each other well before the beginning of the year - and so there was no time in 1577 when arrangements for a marriage between Gian Paolo and Lavinia were not underway. It seems most likely that Lavinia painted this picture in anticipation of the arrival of Severo, intending it as a gift to her betrothed and his family and a corroboration of Orazio Sammachini's optimistic forecast

⁷²Ghirardi in Fortunati-Pietrantonio (*Milan, 1994*), p.43.

of her career prospects.

The day after Severo Zappi met Lavinia Fontana, the marriage contract was drawn up⁷³. It was agreed that Lavinia and Gian Paolo should marry in the middle of June⁷⁴. As a dowry, Lavinia was given a house in the parish of S. Benedetto, which was intended for her security in widowhood but the couple were not to live in it⁷⁵. Gian Paolo had to agree not only to moving to Bologna, but to living with Lavinia in Prospero's house where Prospero would control their living expenses and he had to promise that he and Lavinia would not move from that house until after Prospero's death⁷⁶. At that point, they could move anywhere they chose, but were obliged to take with them and care for Lavinia's mother, Antonia⁷⁷. If the Zappis failed to honour these promises prior to Prospero's death, Severo had to pay Prospero the sum of five hundred scudi⁷⁸. Such a document could be used in a law court to enforce the provisions in the event of default.

The terms of this marriage were very advantageous to Prospero. He had avoided

⁷³*Documenti relativi a Lavinia Fontana*, BCI, published in Galli (Imola, 1940), pp.109-110, Cantaro (Milan, 1989), p.303.

⁷⁴*"Prospero Fontana Bolognese promette M.a Lavinia sua figlia unica leg.ma et naturale al prudente giovane Gio Paolo pittor .per sua leg. ma sposa..di sposarla al principio di Giugno pross.mo.."*

⁷⁵*"con promissione d'assignarli in dote et per fondo dotale, una casa posta ne la cap.la di S. Benedetto.."*

⁷⁶*"M. Gio. Paolo sia obbligato venire ad habitare in Bologna, et stare ad habitare insieme con esso m/Prospero ; Il quale sia anco tenuto fare le spese del vestire necc.rie ad essi marito, et moglie et questo durante la vita d'esso m.Prospero.."*

⁷⁷*"Dopo il quale (Prospero's death), caso che restasse M.a Antonia sua moglie sia ubbligato esso m.Gio. Paolo tenerla in case, et con lei habitare, prestandole li debiti alimenti, et vestito, et questo, o, in Bologna o in altro luogo, ove più piacerà.."*

⁷⁸*"...M. Gio. Paolo obligandosi esso m. Severo che ossevera le sudette cose et non contraverano sotto la pena di scudi 500.."*

much outlay beyond a modest house which the couple would not occupy. He had also ensured that his living costs and those of his wife would be borne by his daughter when he could no longer earn and Gian Paolo was tied to this arrangement until Prospero's death. Given the specificities and peculiarities of Lavinia's situation, it seemed as if the ideal husband had been found for her. Here was a man whose status as a minor noble could only elevate that of Lavinia (something her father was doubtless pleased about), who had taken her without a penny of hard cash and who was prepared to live in Bologna with the rest of the Fontana family.

In this contract, Gian Paolo accepted a role reversal with his wife. He entered her family, instead of the customary departure of the bride to his house and sacrificed his freedom of initiative to his wife's family. In the contract, he is described as being the son of Severo Zappi and as *pittore*. Lavinia is simply described as Prospero's daughter, although she was the one who would be the family artist. It seems more than probable that Gian Paolo was interested in painting and that a reason why Severo was so delighted with Lavinia was that she and his son were compatible in interests. However it seems doubtful that Gian Paolo actually worked as a professional artist. Perhaps being named as a painter in the marriage contract helped to define his role in the household and the city. On occasion he needed to serve as a public representative for Lavinia (particularly in later life when he organised their move to Rome) and he negotiated credit on her behalf⁷⁹. Mancini, who was evidently close to the Fontanas, gives what is probably quite an accurate summary of Gian Paolo's role in life. He defines him as a "painter more of the tongue than of the brush, because he did not

⁷⁹While not the focus here, a number of the existing documents relating to Lavinia's career in Rome indicate Zappi executed many of her business negotiations, including the contracts for her altarpiece in Santa Sabina and S. Paolo fuori le mura. See Galli (*Imola*, 1940), pp.118-122., Cantaro (*Milan*, 1989), pp.310-313.

work (as an artist), but had good judgement and knew how to explain himself; and in that way he helped his wife in her profession"⁸⁰.

Malvasia, who gives a somewhat malicious and inaccurate account of how the Fontana-Zappi marriage was contracted and how it operated makes Gian Paolo an object of continuing ridicule⁸¹. Perhaps suspicious of a man of noble origins marrying beneath him, he concluded that Gian Paolo must have been intellectually defective. He believed him to be some kind of artist manqué, who hung around Prospero's workshop with his apprentices, producing mediocre work, until his wife took pity on him and let him paint the clothes and draperies on the portraits she executed and from then on it became a joke that "heaven had ordained him to be a tailor, not painter"⁸². Gian Paolo Zappi, the "tailor painter" thus became a traditional figure of mockery in Bolognese popular culture⁸³. It seems likely, however, that

⁸⁰ⁿ *..pittore più di lingua che di pennello, perché non operava, ma haveva buon guiditio e sapeva dir il fatto suo; che in questo modo aiutò la moglie nella professione". G. Mancini Considerazione sulla pittura, I, (1620/1956-7), p.233.*

⁸¹ According to Malvasia, Severo Zappi had known Lavinia through many business trips he took to Bologna in the hope of being able to transport his grain there. Lavinia, a favourite with the Papal Legate asked the Legate to expedite Zappi's request. Severo was so pleased, he allowed her to marry Gian Paolo.

⁸²ⁿ *..La estrema deletazione che mostrava il giovane della Pitura, battendo perciò anch'egli per proprio diletto la stanza di Prospero insiem con gli altri Scolari, e qualche poco disegnano, se non così bene, da par suo...Parve in oltre alla sagace giovane potersi francamente assicurare della dabbenagine, anzi semplicità del futuro sposo; il perche, diventuale poscia consorte, con condizione non solo di permetterle, che proseguire potess'ella il dipingere, ma lei ancora aiutar dovesse, e in ciò affaticarsi...a fare almeno il busto a quei ritratti, ch'ella ricavava e a vestirli solamente...si contentasse fare almeⁿ il Sartore, già che il Cielo non lo voleva Pittore..." Malvasia (Bologna, 1678/1969), p.220.*

⁸³ It seems that Gian Paolo was clearly viewed as an emasculated husband in Bolognese culture. Giuseppe Borsi, *Archivio Patrio di Antiche e Moderne. Rimembranze Felsinee Desunte e Compilate sopra autentici ed originali Documenti* (Bologna 1855) gives more details about Gian Paolo's humiliation at Lavinia's hands than he does about Lavinia's own career. He recounts the following ditty "Gian Paolo

after marriage he wanted to understand the rudiments of art and thus spent some time in the Fontana workshop. As Cantaro points out, the painting of drapery and clothes was extremely skilled work and as she grew older, Lavinia's skill in the rendering of fabric, played a considerable role in her ability to charge very high prices for her work⁸⁴. This was not the kind of task she could delegate to her husband just to keep him occupied.

Malvasia's view may rest upon a conversation he had with Alessandro Tiarini, who spent his earliest years as an artist in the Fontana workshop, and who, Malvasia says, told him the whole story about Lavinia's relationship with her husband. He portrays Tiarini as deeply devoted to Lavinia, since Tiarini felt she was responsible for his becoming a painter, and Malvasia describes how, "with a red face", he had shown him a gold quill pen Lavinia had given to him which Tiarini kept until his dying day⁸⁵. Possibly Malvasia was exaggerating, or Tiarini's devotion to Lavinia caused him to be jealous of Lavinia's husband and he willingly denigrated him to make an object of ridicule. Perhaps the young Tiarini may not have been the only painter jealous of Gian Paolo Zappi. For a Bolognese artist to have married Lavinia would have meant inheriting the Fontana workshop, which certainly still counted amongst the most prestigious in Bologna. It may well have been thought that it was wasted on the young man from Imola.

mio, se il cielo non ti vuole pittore, sia tu almeno sartore, e vesti i miei ritratti."

⁸⁴Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), pp.9-10. Cantaro does, however, concur with Malvasia's suggestion that Gian Paolo Zappi had been in Prospero's workshop before Lavinia met him and believes that Lavinia had not met him before, because, Cantaro reasons, she never set foot in her father's workshop (assuming it was in a different place from his house), which seems highly unlikely.

⁸⁵"*Tutto ciò solea raccontarmi il Tiarini, al quale essa levato avea le fasce alla Cresima, mostrandomi perciò una grossa penna di cigno da scrivere, da lei stessa ricoperta, ed intessuta tutta di seta d'oro, con un fiore in cima, e da lei donatagli in tale occasione, e della quale tenne egli conto fino alla morte, per sì degna memoria.*"

After her marriage, the signature on Lavinia's paintings changed to "Lavinia Fontana de Zappis", although those corresponding with her, or writing about her still referred to her as Lavinia Fontana. As far as one can tell, the Fontana-Zappi marriage was a contented one. The couple lived out the rest of their lives together, Gian Paolo survived Lavinia by less than a year. In his will from 1607, he described her as his *dilectissimam uxorem*⁸⁶. Clearly Mancini felt that they worked well together as a professional couple. Above all, the evidence attests that the marriage was the envisaged boost to Lavinia Fontana's professional career, as evinced by the rapid increase in the number of paintings she produced in the period following 1577. Furthermore, Lavinia's father-in-law was able to help provide her with her first documentable public commission. In 1583, the Consiglio Comunale of Imola, on which Severo Zappi had a seat, commissioned Lavinia Fontana to execute an altarpiece for the chapel in Imola's Palazzo Comunale (fig. 8)⁸⁷. The work depicts a miraculous vision of the Madonna which had once been seen over Imola's Ponte Rotto, beneath the Madonna knelt the city's two protectors, San Cassiano and San Pier Chrisologo and a view of Imola

⁸⁶*Testament of Gian Paolo Zappi, Rome, November 14, 1607.* ^{BCI} Published in Galli (Imola, 1940), p.122.

⁸⁷Cantaro (Milan, 1989), p.307, publishes the document pertaining to this commission. Translated from the Latin it reads: "...The aforesaid Magnificent Lord described how the Palace Chapel had been begun and in what state the *palium* (probably altar cloth) commissioned in Bologna, had survived, along with the chapel's other furnishings, and asked whether the painting or icon of the aforesaid altar should be produced by a local or a foreigner. Many and diverse opinions having been uttered, finally all, unanimously and with equal voice, decided that the Lady Lavinia, the daughter of Lord Prospero Fontana of Bologna and the wife of Gian Paolo the son of Severo Zappi, should by her own hand portray and paint in representation of the untouched and immaculate ever Virgin Mary "de Ponte", enthroned between Saints Cassian and Petrus Crisologus, protectors of the city; and as soon as this work is finished, the payment of the aforesaid painter shall be at the discretion of the most noble Magistrate, who shall judge the quality of the work and determine the fee thereby..."

in miniature. The contract stipulates that Lavinia's fee will not be determined until the work is complete, an indication that she was still an untried painter in the public realm.

Thus, having become a married woman Lavinia was able to begin the next phase of her career. She became Lavinia Fontana de Zappis the painter and now correspondent and subject of admiration of *uomini famosi*.

CHAPTER TWO PAINTING FOR THE ILLUSTRIOUS MAN

In 1575, Girolamo Cardano, the renowned doctor of medicine at the University of Bologna, published his autobiography in Latin, *Mea Propria Vita* ("The Story of my Life")¹. Chapter five was titled "Stature and physical appearance" and Cardano provided his reader with a lengthy and meticulous description of his physical appearance, detailing his height, hair and eye colour and the shape of his head and neck². He explains about the problem he has finding shoes to fit his unusually small feet and that while one of his hands is deformed, the other is very beautiful, with long tapering fingers and polished nails. Cardano recognized that his readership, obviously cognizant of his achievements in the world of science, was curious to know what he looked like, for he was clearly aware that scholars all over Europe were anxious to obtain a visual image of their colleagues. In default of a painted portrait, he had to fall back on text.

Cardano's close preoccupation with endowing his readers with an image of his physical attributes reveals him to be the legatee of Renaissance interest in the iconography of the scholar. A concern with the appearance of the illustrious man had strong classical antecedents. Pliny had made a collection of images of his celebrated contemporaries which included writers and scholars and this practise was consciously emulated in fifteenth-century Italy with notable series of images such as those made by Andrea Castagno of scholars like

¹For the translation of Cardano's autobiography, see Jean Stoner, ed., *Girolamo Cardano, The Book of my Life* (New York, 1962).

²Stoner (*New York, 1962*), p.19.

Boccaccio and Petrarch in the *Villa Carducci at Soffiano*³. Both these scholars made significant contributions to promoting the cult of the illustrious⁴. Petrarch's own work on the illustrious men of ancient Rome is known to have been the inspiration behind the decoration of the "Sala Virorum Illustrium", ordered by the Paduan Lord, Francesco Carrara, in which the figures of the scholars depicted were dressed in fourteenth-century, not ancient Roman, attire to suggest that the spirit of their ideas had been reborn⁵. The collections and cycles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were informed by a strict humanist agenda. Images were given textual backing which linked each one to the next to form a sequential development.

By the sixteenth-century, these series were less academically rigid and bore witness to a burgeoning curiosity about the appearance of the international Republic of Letters⁶. In

³There is a wide and varied literature on the art of the illustrious man. See, among other sources, C. Jägerbäck, "Uomini Famosi in Renaissance Art" in L.D. Larsson, G. Pochtat, eds. *Kunstgeschichte Studien zur Florentiner Renaissance* (Stockholm, 1980), pp.307-326 and M. Donato, "Gli' Eroi Romani tra storia ed exemplum, I primi cicli umanistici di uomini famosi", S. Settis, ed. *Memoria dell'Antico nella Arte Italiana*, vol II, (Turin, 1985), pp.97-152. I would like to thank Alison Wright for giving me advice on how to approach this tradition.

⁴Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* was dedicated in 1363-4 to Mainardo dei Cavalcanti, a Neapolitan knight resident in Florence. See below for a discussion of his *De claris Mulieribus*.

Florence, 1964.

⁵Petrarch, *De viris illustribus* (1345). Roberto Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1969, reprinted, 1988), p.38 discusses the "translation" text in Carrara's room decorated with pictures of illustrious men and cites T.E. Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua", *Art Bulletin*, XXXIV (1952), pp.95-116.

⁶For a brief survey of the history of these collections in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Centuries, see Susan J. Barnes, "The 'Uomini Illustri', Humanist Culture and the Development of a Portrait Tradition in early Seventeenth-Century Italy", in *Studies in the History of Art - Cultural Differentiation and Cultural Identity in the Visual Arts*, ed. S.J. Barnes and W. Melion, Washington, National Gallery of Art, 27, 1989, pp.81-94

many instances scholars themselves were in correspondence with other scholars over wide geographical areas and "portrait exchange" became a feature of such contacts⁷. Clearly a further extension of this interest was the wish to possess visual documents of those who made significant contributions to the development of knowledge. Other individuals were perhaps less active in the field of scholarship, but prized association with men of science and hence systematically surrounded themselves with these images. Amongst the most significant of these in sixteenth-century Italy was Paolo Giovio who collected images of the great and famous from all walks of life. Giovio went so far as to define the principles informing his collection in his work *Le Inscrittioni poste sotto le Vere Immagini de gli Huomini Famosi* (Florence, 1552), asserting his emulation of Pliny and his especial valorisation of his images of thinkers and poets which continually inspired him.⁸ Others in Italy, such as the Mantuan Marco Mantova Benavides, followed Giovio's example, albeit on a lesser scale, and in his case with special reference to jurists⁹. Giovio also had imitators in France, such as André Thevet who collected portraits of scholars and explorers and had engravings made of them¹⁰. These engravings were then used to preface particular chapters on the life and deeds of explorers and colonisers such as Columbus and Cortes, whose exploits captured the imagination of a generation. Giovio provided inspiration to Vasari, who, in 1556 was

⁷The best known example of such an exchange is that between Erasmus and Thomas More, who both had their portraits painted by Holbein.

⁸See Barnes, *Ut supra*.

⁹See Eugene Dwyer, "Marco Mantova Benavides e i ritratti di giureconsulti illustri," *Bollettino d'Arte*, 76, 1990, pp.59-70.

¹⁰André Thevet, *Les vrais pourtraits et vies des hommes illustres* (Paris, 1584, reprint, New York, 1973). For a partial commentary, see Roger Schlesinger, ed. *Selections from André Thevet's 'Les Vrais pourtraits et vies des hommes illustres; Portraits from the Age of Exploration'* (Urbana, Illinois, 1993).

commissioned with producing a pictorial depiction of Cosimo il Vecchio's scholarly and artistic patronage. Vasari sought out portraits of philosophers and artists who had benefitted from Cosimo's bounty in order to produce a work in which actual likenesses were included¹¹. Vasari also made his own collection of artists' portraits, planning to publish them both as a separate volume to the *Lives* and to use them to illustrate his written work¹².

Although Bologna lacked a Paduan Lord, a Montefeltro, a Medici, or even a Giovio to make collections or order decorative cycles commemorating the achievements of *uomini illustri*, it had more material for the subject matter of such works than almost anywhere else in Italy. Its University, originally primarily a seat of canon and civil law, had expanded since its foundation to become home to some of Europe's most progressive and renowned scholars in the arts and sciences. It was the hub of academic debate conducted in many disciplines across European and indeed continental frontiers. In 1562, this was marked by the establishment of its first fixed location, the Archiginassio. Its prominent scholars at this time included the jurist and emblemist Andrea Alciati, the humanist Achille Bocchi, Luca Ghini, Europe's best known botanist in his day. In the late sixteenth-century prominent scholars included the surgeon Gaspare Tagliacozzi who was a pioneer in the fabrication of artificial body parts¹³. His colleagues included the medical scientists Giulio Cesare Arantius

¹¹Patricia Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari, Art and History* (New Haven, 1995), p.163. Vasari's endeavours resulted in the painting (produced in collaboration with Marco da Faenza), *Cosimo il Vecchio surrounded by Artists and Men of Letters*, in the Sala di Cosimo, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

¹²Rubin (New Haven, 1995), p.208.

¹³Maria Teach Gnudi and Jerome Pierce Webster, *The Life and Times of Gaspare Tagliacozzi, Surgeon of Bologna* (New York, 1950). Tagliacozzi could be described as one of the first "plastic surgeons". He made body parts from wax and made particularly sophisticated false noses (the nose rots away in advanced stages of syphilis, then quite a common ailment).

and Girolamo Mercuriale, the Dominican mathematician Ignazio Danti, the historian Carlo Sigonio and the world famous naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi who mustered explorers and those with scholarly interests in all parts of the discovered world to provide him with plant and animal specimens as well as drawings.

Given the intensity of scholarly activity in the city - to which must be added the theological discourses emanating from the Councils of Trent - it is hardly surprising that the representation of *uomini famosi* developed as a portrait genre. Indeed, it could be said to have been fostered by Gabriele Paleotti. He dedicated several chapters of Book II of his discourse on images to the subject of portraiture¹⁴. He was suspicious of those who commissioned their own portraits out of sheer vanity and condemned illicit lovers who exchanged portraits of each other. However, he was positively enthusiastic about collections of portraits of *uomini illustri*, feeling that images of men, who by their example served the public benefit were certainly worth keeping for posterity. He even assures his readership that making collections of such images has Christian antecedents and cites Marco Varrone, as an ancient Christian who had a collection of seven hundred images of famous men.¹⁵

Scholarly imagery could take several forms. Individual scholars or their families might choose to have a sculpture carved for their tombstone, which would depict them surrounded by books and students¹⁶. Andrea Alciati's emblem for *Silentio* is the image of a scholar

¹⁴Gabriele Paleotti (*Bologna 1582/Bari 1960*), pp. 332-353. Paleotti's chapters on portraits are titled "Delle imagini cavate dal naturale, che si chiamono ritratti", "Dei ritratti d'altri", "Dei ritratti degli amanti, e come debbono governarsi i pittori intorno adessi", "Dei ritratti degli eretici" and "Dei ritratti de'santi".

¹⁵Gabriele Paleotti, "Dei ritratti d'altri", p.339.

¹⁶Examples of this type are to be found in the Museo Civico dell Arte Medievale in Bologna.

seated in his book-lined study, a finger to his lips¹⁷. The verse beneath the emblem recommends that one should learn from the example provided by this "portrait" that by silent contemplation, not idle chatter, one might become a new Hippocrates¹⁸. The iconography of the relief sculpture and Alciati's *impresa* then informed the composition of the painted portraits of scholars which progressively emerged as a favoured medium of scholarly representation in late sixteenth-century Bologna. In Bolognese scholars' portraits from the late sixteenth-century, the men are usually depicted in half length portraits, dressed in scholarly robes. They are seen seated at their desks, turned to the viewer and indicating with their hand their form of study, or engaged in reading texts appropriate to their subject, mathematics, medicine or astronomy, or else they are writing notes and correspondence.

The representation of such scholars became a specialist service undertaken by a certain number of Bolognese painters, amongst them Bartolomeo Passerotti and his sons, Tiburzio and Aurelio and Agostino Carracci¹⁹. Prospero Fontana's house, as discussed in the

¹⁷This imagery must be taken from the fifth-century Rule of St. Benedict, in which silence among the monks was insisted upon (in order to minimize hazards of gossiping and complaining) and the library was emphasized as the place of study. William Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco* (New Haven, 1993) contrasts the Benedictine practise of spending silent time in the library with that of Dominican practise, p. 195.

¹⁸Andrea Alciati, *Diverse Imprese accomodate e diverse moralità con versi che i loro significati dichiarano* (Lyons, 1546). The verse under the *Silentio* emblem reads "Mentre sta questo e tien la bocca chiusa/Non è dal savio differente il matto/Perché la lingua lui medesimo accusa/che è de la sua pazzia vero ritratto/Onde a capir la mente in lui confusa/Impari de l'esempio qui ritratto/Tenga chiuse le labra e strett i denti/et un novello Harpocrate diventi."

¹⁹Angela Ghirardi, "Ritratto e scena di genere. Arte, scienza, collezionismo nell'autunno del Rinascimento" in *La Pittura in Emilia e in Romagna, Il Cinquecento* (Milan, 1995), pp.148-155 provides a survey of the portraits of scholars by these artists. They include a portrait by Prospero Fontana of Giovanni Fagnani Pecori, a prelate involved in the Council of Trent (Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'arte), Bartolomeo Passerotti's portrait of Ignazio Danti (Brest, Musée des Beaux Arts, fig. 9), Tiburzio Passerotti's portrait of Gaspare Tagliacozzi (Bologna, Istituto Ortopedico Rizzoli, fig.

previous chapter, was a meeting place for the Bolognese intelligentsia. He worked as a fresco painter and draftsman for Achille Bocchi and Ulisse Aldrovandi. He also provided the illustrations to Bocchi's *Symbolicarum Quaestionum*, which was brought out by the short lived humanist printing house, the Società Tipografica Bolognese, founded in 1572 by a group of Bolognese intellectuals, including Gabriele Paleotti's brother Camillo, and Carlo Sigonio²⁰. However, although Prospero continued to cultivate his contacts with scholarly society, and painted portraits of some of them, it was his daughter who would become renowned as the portraitist to *uomini illustri*. How does one account for her success? What made the *Uomini Famosi* in increasing numbers seek out Lavinia Fontana de Zappis' services? What role did the portraits of the *Uomini Famosi* play in her rapidly expanding business?

Answers to the first two questions can profitably be summarised under the headings of: Paleotti's patronage and evident approval of the young artist which was critical in this stage of her career: the modest prices she initially charged these learned clients and, thirdly, the added interest value increasingly given to her portraits because they were executed by a woman artist, herself a Renaissance phenomenon in her own right. It is remarkable that Lavinia Fontana, Sofonisba Anguissola and Fede Galizia all painted portraits of learned men early in their careers²¹. The relatively low prices they charged may have been a factor in this coincidence, but of far greater importance to the scholarly minded was the recognition that

10). Agostino Carracci painted Gabriele Paleotti's portrait and that of Ulisse Aldrovandi.

²⁰For the place of Bocchi and his book in Bologna see Elizabeth See Watson, *Achille Bocchi and the Emblem Book as Symbolic Form* (Cambridge, 1993).

²¹Sofonisba Anguissola painted the portrait of a Dominican astrologer in 1555 and her sister Lucia painted Pietro Maria, a doctor in Cremona. Fede Galizia painted the Jesuit scholar and historian, Paolo Morigia.

Fontana, Anguissola and Galizia epitomised the rebirth of the accomplished woman of ancient times. Boccaccio, Alberti and Vasari all make mention of the passage in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, which describes six female artists from ancient Greece and Rome²². All these texts were widely appreciated and acknowledged. Could there be better visual proof that the spirit of the ancient world lived on than in the portrait of a *vir illustrus*, painted by a *clara mulier*?

Certainly the atmosphere of Prospero Fontana's house, with its scholarly visitors would promote such sentiments about the value of Lavinia as a portrait painter. But the relationship that Gabriele Paleotti developed with her gave her even greater validation as an artist. It was one that stemmed from knowledge of Lavinia since childhood, confidence in her impeccable pictorial rendering of scriptural material, as well as his belief in the strengths and capabilities of women. It received expression in the commission for the altarpiece for the chapel that Paleotti built in the church of San Pietro in Bologna in 1593. In his diary, kept between 1589 and 1600, the Bolognese Francesco Galliani wrote a detailed description of the ceremonies which took place when this chapel, which he described as sumptuous and magnificent, was unveiled²³. It was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and decorated with numerous paintings depicting scenes from her life, produced by a number of "excellent painters". He was

²²Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* XXXV. Boccaccio, in *De Mulieribus Claris* cites Thamyris (or Timarete), Irene, and Marcia (or Iaia of Cyzivus). Alberti in *Della Pittura* (London, 1972 edition), p.63 mentions Marcia while Vasari discusses Iaia, Irene and Timarete. See Sutherland Harris and Nochlin (*Los Angeles*, 1976), pp.22-23 and Whitney Chadwick (*London*, 1990), p.27.

²³The original edition of Galliani's diary is in the Archivio Malvezzi-Campeggi, IV, 47/107, ASB. An eighteenth-century copy is held in the BCB, B 3567. On its frontispiece, Galliani writes "*Qui su questo libro sara scritte tutte le cose notabile et importante che ocorerano nel mondo alli mei tempi e specialmente in Bologna et ancor nella mia Casa e Fameg^hlia, scrite da me Francesco Galliani.*"

especially excited about the chapel's altarpiece, a painting of the Assumption of the Virgin, which had been painted by "the hand of the magnificent, most virtuous and beautiful Lavinia Fontana; the said Archbishop has been her patron and that of her family and he has given her a yearly pension of three hundred scudi"²⁴.

Clearly Paleotti's approbation allowed Lavinia to develop a relationship with other members of his family, as is evinced by the letter sent by Camillo Paleotti to Vincenzo Gerio in Pistoia indicating Camillo's readiness to arrange a portrait commission from Lavinia which will be discussed below. Being approved by the Bishop meant that there were few patronage sources closed to Lavinia. Distinguished clergymen figure amongst her subjects, as did the intellectuals whom Paleotti supported and endorsed (he was particularly close to Carlo Sigonio and Ulisse Aldrovandi). It is probable that Lavinia painted Paleotti's portrait herself when in 1578, Alonso Ciacono requested from her a number of portraits, including a sketch of Paleotti, whose works Ciacono explained that he admired²⁵.

The correspondence between Ciacono and Lavinia, which began not long after her

²⁴This passage reads as follows: *"Havendo lo Ill.mo Monsignor Cardinale Paleotti, archivescovo di Bologna fatto edificare in nome dela sua fameglia Paleotti una sontuosa et Magnifica Capella in S. Pietro del destro lato del corro et finita et discoperta il giorno di San Pietro, et consecrarla in nome della gloriosa Vergine Maria, dovè da vari eccellenti pittori v'è dipinta in più quadri la Vita e Laudi di Nostra Signora, et il Quadro ovè l'anderia ancona dove è dipinta di sua mano la Magnifica et Virtuosiissima et bella Sig^amora Lavinia Fontana. Detto Monsignor Il.mo l'ha fatto patronato di sua familia con l'entrato l'anno di scudi 300."*

²⁵See note 27 for reference to Ciacono's letter. In reference to Paleotti, Ciacono wrote; *"Et si v.s. volesse acompagnar su retrato con un esquizo solamente di ill.mo cardinal Paleoto essendo fatto alcun retrato suo altramente no, mi la farebbe grandissima per che ha scritto il Cardinal molti libri et è famoso per questa parte."* There are few portraits of Paleotti still in existence and the only one signed by an artist is in fact by Agostino Carracci. However, it seems unlikely that Lavinia Fontana did not herself produce portraits of the Bishop, despite his scepticism about the virtues of portraiture.

marriage, is of critical importance in documenting her role as a painter of famous men. A man with a collection of portraits of the famous and noteworthy, Alonso Ciacono (1530-1599) was a Spanish prelate and scholar who spent a great deal of time in Rome²⁶. Given the close relationship between Bologna and Rome in the 1570s, it is not surprising that Ciacono met acquaintances of Lavinia and was able to obtain several portraits of Bolognese scholars by her hand. The initial request was possibly verbal, passed on via an intermediary, but having received the portraits, Ciacono wrote to Lavinia from Rome on October 17, 1578²⁷. This Spanish prelate writes that Paolo Emylio (a lawyer from Modena) had just given him the three portraits of Carlo Sigonio, Alessandro Aquilino and "Bocca di Ferro" by Lavinia's hand²⁸. Ciacono planned to have large paintings made from these small ones, which he would then place in his collection of two hundred images of men, famous for their holiness, or as rulers, warriors, or for their gifts as men of letters or in noble arts²⁹. Famous women are included among this list also³⁰. Ciacono explains he plans to turn these images

²⁶A biography of Alonso Ciacono (or Chacón) is to be found in the DBI, pp.352-356.

²⁷The original of this letter, published in the appendices of Galli and Cantaro is in the BCI, *Documenti relativi a Lavinia Fontana*.

²⁸*Hebbe per mezzo del Sig.re Paulo Emylio gli tre retratti di Carolo Sigonio, Alexandro Aquilino, Bocca di Ferro...*

See below for more on Sigonio and Lavinia's portraits of him. Paolo Emylio was an established associate of the Fontana-Zappi families, as he was witness to a contract between Caterina Borzani and Gian Paolo Zappi when Borzani loaned Zappi a pearl necklace (this contract is discussed in Chapter 3). There seems to be no information to be found on Aquilino. "Bocca di Ferro" may be a relative of the Bolognese geometrician, Scipione dal Ferro who died in 1526.

²⁹*"gli quali...sevir mene di far quadri grandi como fin hoggi sono fatti fin a ducenti di huomini famosi per santita di vita dignita imperatoria o Regio, per valore de arme o veramente per lettere et arti nobili.."*

³⁰*"..cosi anco de donne famose".*

into prints which will be accompanied by verses praising the subjects' abilities³¹. He holds the images sent to him by Lavinia in the highest esteem and considers them as three most precious gems³².

That Ciacono is especially curious about the painter of these works is confirmed by his next remarks. He states he plans to come to Bologna for no other reason than to see her for himself and to be able to look upon "such a famous woman and excellent artist that our times have produced, who can be set in the company of the beautiful and learned Sophonisba (Anguissola)"³³. In fact, he is anxious that Lavinia should send him her own portrait, which he could then place next to one he owns of Sofonisba³⁴. The portrait that Lavinia probably sent to Ciacono will be discussed below. What is to be noted here, is that Ciacono placed Lavinia with Sofonisba Anguissola and he was interested in comparing their work.

A Roman scholar with similar interests in collecting portraits of famous men was Fulvio Orsini (1529-1600)³⁵. Orsini was also interested in the work of women artists as the

³¹"...ho ragunato per redurgli a quadri grandi de picoli et anco in stampa con gli testimonij de lode et gloria sua.."

³²"...mi saranno quelli di v.s. in grandissima stima et penso consevargli come tre gioie preciosissime".

³³"Et quando io non havessi di andar a Bologna per altro che per vederla et considerar di appresso una così rara virtù sua et una donna così famosa et tanto excelente artifice qual nostri tempi hanno prodota per acompagnar la bella et doti di Sophonisba, serebbe ben premiato dil fastidio et trabalgij dil viaggio". Ciacono used the ph spelling of Anguissola's first name. In modern usage, it is spelt with an f

³⁴"..pregarla si contenti di farmi una gratia la qual havro per singularissima di contentaris di mandarmi un retratino suo..." .

³⁵From 1558 onwards Fulvio Orsini was in the employment of the Farnese family, first as the librarian to Ranuccio Farnese. He was then made keeper of Farnese antiquities by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and developed his own interest in collecting. In Rome in 1570 he published his *Imagines et ellogia virorum illustrium*.

property inventory taken after his death indicates that he owned paintings by Anguissola and Lavinia Fontana³⁶. The picture by Lavinia in Orsini's possession was a small oval copper portrait of Carlo Sigonio (1520-1584). For a man interested in collecting images of his fellow scholars, Sigonio's portrait was an indispensable one, since he can be described as one of the first "modern" historians, applying new critical methods to the study of the past³⁷.

The correspondence between Sigonio and Orsini surrounding the commission for a portrait still survives. Sigonio wrote to Orsini on January 3, 1579, stating that Francesco Pagano, who had just returned from Rome, had informed him that Orsini wanted a portrait of him by Lavinia Fontana³⁸. Sigonio explains to Orsini that Lavinia has given birth in the past month and only just returned to public life in the past two days³⁹. Orsini apparently wanted a portrait miniature of Sigonio and Sigonio warned him that if he wanted this picture in order to be able to judge Lavinia's artistry, then he should reconsider "because little art can

³⁶Pierre de Nolhac, "Les Collections de Fulvio Orsini" in *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1884, I, p.435. Orsini owned one of Anguissola's self-portraits.

³⁷See William McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio, the Changing World of the Late Renaissance* (Princeton, 1989). Sigonio published over sixty works in his lifetime, including commentaries on Livy and Aristotle. Many of his later works were published by the printing house he helped found, the *Società Tipografica Bolognese*. Sigonio also took over the writing of the History of Bologna after the death of Achille Bocchi. *Historiae Bononiensis libri VI* was printed in 1571 and 1578.

³⁸This letter is published in Pierre de Nolhac, "Pietro Vettori et Carlo Sigonio - Correspondance avec Fulvio Orsini" in *Studi e documenti di Storia e Diritto*, 10, 1889, p. 146. Sigonio's letter opens: "*Torna il Sor Francesco Pagano (whose identity is unknown), il quale m'ha esposto il desiderio suo d'haver un ritratto di mano della signora Lavinia Fontana*"

³⁹"*le dico che la S.ra Lavinia e stata di parto in questo mese passato, et non sono due di che è uscita.*"

be demonstrated in such a little thing"⁴⁰. But, Sigonio writes, if Orsini does want a little picture a half "bruzzo" around, or "a little thing like that she did for the Reverend Padre Ciacono" (suggesting that Orsini knew of this picture in Alfonso Ciacono's collection), then Lavinia can do that; it will be life-like work and the picture's price will be low due to its size and lack of decoration⁴¹. Sigonio informs Orsini that he plans to have Lavinia make a large portrait of himself as well⁴².

Sigonio sent Lavinia's portrait of himself to Orsini on November 3, 1579. The accompanying letter is full of protestations of modesty, begging Orsini not to show it to anyone, as all will think Sigonio "the vainest man in the world"⁴³. He invites Orsini to send him his portrait, but tells him he is not obliged to do so, if he thinks it an indecent vanity for a man of his age and status⁴⁴. Sigonio writes again to Orsini on December 12, surprised that Orsini has not been in contact with him on the receipt of the portrait⁴⁵. He explains that he would not have bothered him, but for the fact that the portrait is by Lavinia and that he believes it not merely appropriate, but indeed necessary for Orsini to write and thank Lavinia,

⁴⁰"*Le aggiungo poi che se vuole il ritratto per l'eccellentia del maestro, che in così piccola cosa poca arte si può mostrare..*"

⁴¹"*se per altro consideri ella bene ciò che fa; perciocché il naturale e vivo è persona di poco pretio per virtù ne di molta bellezza per l'età. Si V.S. volesse un quadrettino di mezzo bruzzo in circa, mandi l'intentione che la farò servire et se pur vorrà una cosetta come quella del R.do P. Ciacono, si farà.*"

⁴²"*La dimando così fatta per farla ritrarre in quadro maggiore.*"

⁴³"*...che io lo habbia fatto fare, perciocché io sarei reputato il più vano uomo del mondo..*" Sigonio's letter is reproduced in Cantaro (Milan, 1989), pp.306-307.

⁴⁴"*...Se piacerà a Lei di mandarmi il suo, l'haverò caro: ma non l'obbligo per non fare una vanità indecente a sua età e grado*".

⁴⁵This letter is also reproduced in Cantaro (Milan, 1989), p.307: "*...Ho inteso, come V.S. ha ricevuto il ritratto, di che io cominiciava a dubitare la risposta...*"

as "she is, as we all are, anxious for praise and young women so much more so than us elderly men(!)"⁴⁶. A postscript to the note reads "I remind you that the lady is called Lavinia Fontana Zappi"⁴⁷. Whether Orsini did as Sigonio requested and wrote to thank Lavinia is not known.

Although the small oval portrait of Sigonio belonging to Orsini is now lost, what is most probably the larger version that Sigonio requested from Lavinia still exists. The painting was criticised by Roberto Zapperi, in a recent article on Annibale Carracci's portraiture, for not depicting the ambivalence Sigonio supposedly felt towards sitting for his portrait that he expresses in his letter to Orsini, when he writes that he fears all will think him vain⁴⁸. Such criticism does not take into account that in all likelihood Sigonio's remarks are simply an expression of false modesty that he felt appropriate to the occasion. If Sigonio really was worried about being accused of vanity, he would never have asked Lavinia to paint a full size portrait of himself.

This portrait (Modena, Galleria d'Estense, fig.11) later reduced in size and cut into an oval shape, now measures 1.22 x 0.95 ms. It was one of Lavinia's first larger scale works. It shows her adopting a portrait type employed by Bartolomeo Passerotti and she is still a little tentative about the handling of Sigonio's face - the planes are too broad and flat. To see how her style developed over the next few years, one can ^{look} at her "Portrait of an unknown

⁴⁶"Sia le grato per essere di mano della S.ra Lavinia, che per altro non veggio causa di haverlo ricercato. Reputo non solo opportuna cosa, ma quasi necessaria il ringraziar le predetta S.ra per ciò che ella sa come tutti siamo avidi di lode, et più le donne giovani, che noi huomini attempati."

⁴⁷"Le ricordo che la S.ra si chiama Lavinia Fontana Zappi"

⁴⁸Roberto Zapperi, "Il Ritratto e la Maschera; Ricerche su Annibale Carracci Ritrattista" in *Bolletino d'Arte*, 60, 1990, pp.85-94.

scholar", signed and dated 1581 (Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale, fig.12) in which the treatment of the man's physiognomy is much defter and surer and much more refined. Nonetheless, Sigonio's portrait is one in which the narrative of a scholar's life is revealed and it demonstrates what Lavinia, as a portraitist, could offer a man of letters. She provides a convincing, economical narrative of his learned attributes, the books he studied, the works he wrote, the divine inspiration revealed to him. She also becomes expert in the rendition of specific textiles associated with scholarly garb, brown and black silk jacquards, fur collars and linings. Lavinia's portrait of Sigonio sees him in a room seated at his desk, in his finest academic robes, black silk jacquard with a big fur collar. He beckons with one hand to the viewer. His glance is distracted, deep in thought, but the viewer may examine the scholarly paraphernalia on his desk, a letter addressed to him in a clear hand to reveal his scholarly contacts, paper knife, sheets of paper, an ornate ink well, seal, a pair of spectacles. There are also three bound books, which are quite probably meant to be editions of his *Historiam Bononiensium*, which was being widely disseminated in 1578. Through a doorway one can see his students, the recipients of the fruits of Sigonio's wisdom. These details were doubtless Sigonio's idea of what "art could show" on a larger scale and they allow the viewer a fuller picture of a scholar's life than just the simple production of a likeness.

From Carlo Sigonio's first letter to Fulvio Orsini, one obtains a valuable picture of the constraints already placed upon Lavinia Fontana as a married woman artist. By 1578, she was not only working hard to build and expand a clientèle, she also was fulfilling her duties as a mother. From 1578 through to 1592 she was more or less constantly pregnant, giving birth eleven times, although many of the children died soon after birth. Furthermore, in the late 1570s, not only was she a working mother, but also accumulating academic honours. Masini lists her among the "Donne addottrinate" at the University, indicating that she was

given a degree in 1580⁴⁹. It is impossible to say whether Lavinia actually attended classes there, whether the degree was of an honorary nature, either due to her family's scholarly connections or as a reflection of developing respect for her own talents and recognition by the famous. It is also possible that men like Sigonio had given her instruction in return for a low-priced painting. Nonetheless, the conferral of this degree upon Lavinia suggests that her city was recognising her as a person of note, that she was able to engage in an informed discourse with her scholarly clients and contribute to the reputation of both town and gown.

Significantly, a self-portrait by Lavinia executed around this time, indicates that she was anxious to portray herself as a woman of scholarly abilities (Florence, Uffizi, fig.13). The composition and iconography she employs in the miniature copper oval painting signed and dated 1579 is very like that used in the production of portraits of scholarly men⁵⁰. In fact, it seems likely that this little painting was one that she sent to Alonso Ciacono in 1579 following his written request in the previous year for a portrait of her for his collection.

The particular enticement Ciacono proffered to Lavinia in the letter referred to above, was that her portrait (along with the other five hundred in his collection) was to be made into an engraving to be paid for by the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, allowing her, Ciacono continued, eternal glory⁵¹. No artist would be able to refuse such an opportunity for self-

⁴⁹For more on the place of women at the University, see the next chapter. Masini's list of women appears on p.666 of *Bologna Perlustrata*. Other women he cites include Veronica Gambara.

⁵⁰Copper seems to have become a conventional support at this point in time for "miniature" portraits. The portrait of Sigonio by Lavinia sent to Fulvio Orsini was on copper. Possibly its durability was felt to be an advantage for travel.

⁵¹*Ut supra* for reference. Ciacono wrote: "...per poterlo mettere in stampa infra 500 huomini et donne illustri che saranno intagliati in Rame la spesa delle quali il serenissimo arciduca di Austria Ferdinando. Torno a pregarla non mi voglia privar di questo gusto et contento et a v.s. di questa gloria che ancora che v.s. ha assai no e

publicity and for Lavinia's burgeoning career the chance, albeit indirect, to be associated with royalty - not one to be missed.

Indeed, Lavinia wrote back to Ciacono in May of 1579, enclosing her portrait. She describes how honoured she is to have her portrait placed among those of so many distinguished people and that Ciacono does her too much honour in praising her in such lavish terms and by giving her portrait such an honoured place, which she attributes to Ciaconio's over abundant kindness, in placing it next to someone so much "more virtuous and worthy as is the lady Sophonisba"⁵². This remark is interesting in itself for it is the first document in which one woman artist acknowledges another. Lavinia feels that "as the discordant note in fine music makes the good ones all the sweeter, and as some clouds that ornament the heavens make others all the more resplendent" so shall her portrait function in Ciacono's collection!⁵³ Mindful she is writing to a priest, she asks him to remember her in his prayers⁵⁴. This letter also demonstrates that Lavinia was entirely *au fait* with the rhetoric of correspondence. She demonstrates the same kinds of protestations of modesty to Ciacono as Sigonio does to Orsini and makes discreet reference to her correspondent's ecclesiastical

conociuta per tutto come io penso celebrarla et propagarla per seculi et un genero di eternità ."

⁵²See Galli (Imola, 1940), p. 80 and Cantaro, p.306 for transcription of this document. The original of this letter is in the *Documenti relativi a Lavinia Fontana*, BCI. Lavinia writes: "...ella mi fa troppo honore si con le sue sourabbondanti lodi, si con la intentione di dare al mio retratto così honorato luoco, l'uno attribuisco al'eccesso dell'amorevolezza sua, l'altro mi fa pensare ch'ella giudiziosamente vuole che tanto più risplenda la virtu et il valore della sig.ra Sofonisba..."

⁵³"...ma si come i buoni musici alle volte note dissonanti per formar consonanti tanto più dolci, e si come alcuna nube fa che gli ornamenti del Cielo si mostrano tanto più risplendenti, così V.S. ha pensato con la imperfettione, e con le tenebre del mio ritratto illustrare tanto maggiormente il suo nobilissimo Museo."

⁵⁴"...pregandola a tener memoria di me nelle sue oracioni".

position.

Romeo Galli believed that this oval copper miniature is the one that Lavinia sent to Ciaccono⁵⁵. Certainly its size is one convenient for easy travel from Bologna to Rome. The portrait presents Lavinia in a studiolo. She is engaged in artistic activity of a very learned nature - she is learning from the antique. She has two nude statuettes in front of her and a case of fragments of classical statues. Like other scholars, she has pen in hand, inkwell by her side, to record her impressions on the blank piece of paper in front of her. It is an extremely informative painting. On the one hand, it suggests that copying classical works, making sketches and notes, is either a regular part of Lavinia's artistic practise, or else that she wished others to consider it to be so. It is plausible to posit that she used antique statuettes as tools of learning. As discussed above, it is extremely unlikely that her early training involved drawing nudes from life and thus such statuettes as those found in front of her, would have allowed her to develop some understanding of anatomy. At the same time, learning about the antique turns her into a scholar and hence more than just a painter of scholars. She can make some claim to join their ranks as an expert in the understanding of classical form. She already knew from Ciacconio that her picture was to be engraved and thus replicated many times and she had to consider how she wished to be understood by those who would view her. She also had to bear in mind that she was to be exhibited alongside Sofonisba Anguissola and hence needed to appear as intellectually and artistically sophisticated as possible to merit comparison with the older painter through her own highly intelligent and carefully constructed self-representation. Furthermore, this miniature painting also

⁵⁵Ciaccono's collection of paintings was dispersed on his death in 1599. This portrait is first cited in a 1713 inventory of Ferdinand de' Medici's collection of miniatures at Poggio a Caiano. See Galli, (*Imola*, 1940) pp. 78-81, 115-116, Cantaro, (*Milan*, 1989), pp.86-87, Fortunati-Pietrantonio, ed. (*Milan*, 1994), pp.181-182.

demonstrates how much more skilled she was technically in 1579 than she had been two years ago when she painted her "dowry" portrait.

While one does not know whether or not Lavinia's portrait was engraved as Ciacono had promised, her relationship with the Spanish scholar probably helped her to secure an extremely important commission later in life. Ciacono was an associate of Cardinal Francesco Pacheco, who was involved in documenting and advising Philip II of Spain on his artistic purchases. It is Pacheco who describes the altarpiece of the Holy Family by Lavinia Fontana that was sent to Spain in 1589 and for which she was paid three hundred ducats⁵⁶. In this light, sending out a highly competent self-portrait as a gift would have been a shrewd investment for future, high-profit commissions.

Lavinia's correspondence with Ciacono provides important indications of the benefits she was building up from her portraits of famous men. Above all she was laying down a reputation extending far beyond the walls of Bologna and reaching as far as the Spanish court. With such contacts further commissions could only ensue. Moreover, in the process she was emerging as an illustrious woman, someone to be placed in collections of the famous.

Another scholar who evidently sat for Lavinia on numerous occasions was Girolamo Mercuriale (1530-1606). Mercuriale held a post in the renowned medical faculty of Bologna between 1587 and 1593. The author of three significant medical treatises - *De Arte Gymnastica* of 1573, which expounded the benefits of physical education, *De Morbis Puerorum* on children's ailments and *De Morbis Mulieribus Praelectiones* on gynecological problems, both published in 1583, he was a scholar whose presence at prestigious institutions was in great demand. Before moving to Bologna, he had taught at Padua, and was then

⁵⁶Further details of this commission are provided in Chapter Six, "Putti, Pictures and Pedagogy".

"head hunted" by the Grand duke Ferdinand I de' Medici for a lucrative position at Pisa⁵⁷. Like other scholars discussed in this chapter, Mercuriale also enjoyed Farnese patronage.

Given his position of eminence in the Republic of Letters, it is not surprising that his portrait was widely solicited. On April 30 1587, he wrote a letter to the Duke of Urbino, in response to the Duke's request for three portraits of the doctor⁵⁸. This letter reveals much about Lavinia's status by this time as the portrait painter of scholars in Bologna. Mercuriale explains to the Duke that he will commence sitting for his portraits next Monday and that the artist who will paint him is Lavinia Fontana, "who has painted many great men of letters most successfully"⁵⁹. Mercuriale underlines this point by informing the Duke that he has already sent a portrait of himself by her to Bavaria, where it had been received with great satisfaction⁶⁰. He wrote again to the Duke of Urbino on June 18th informing him of the completion of the portraits, in which he expresses a quite rapturous enthusiasm for the work done by the "excellent painter who is first among her sex and is the rarest of persons"⁶¹.

The relationship between this scholar and Lavinia continued. On October 29, 1591, Camillo Paleotti wrote to Vincenzo Gerio of Pistoia as an associate of Gerio, Signor Bacchi,

⁵⁷See Italo Paoletti, *Gerolamo Mercuriale e Il suo Tempo* (Lanciano, 1963).

⁵⁸This correspondence is published in Galli (*Imola*, 1940), p.117 and Cantaro, (*Milan*, 1989), p.308. Mercuriale's letter begins, "*Subito che ho ricevuta la letta di V.A. Ser.ma mi son posto a servirla nel comandamento ch'è restata servita farmi nel procuargli quei tre ritratti.*"

⁵⁹"*Così ho dato ordine che si cominceranno lunedì prossimo et serà fatta l'opra per mano di M.a Lavinia Fontana, la quale ha ritratti molti grand'huomini letterati felicissimam.te.*"

⁶⁰"*...io glie n'ho fatto fare per mandar in Baviera che ha sodisfatto incredilm.te.*"

⁶¹"*Non ho però prima che hora potuto vederne il fine, sendo q.ta Pittrice Eccellente per dire il vero in ogni conto si prevale della condizione del sesso, e della rarità della persona.*"

had wished to be sent a portrait of Mercuriale that Lavinia had painted. Camillo Paleotti informed Gerio that this portrait has already been sent by the subject himself to Forlì (Mercuriale's home town), but that he, Camillo Paleotti promises to arrange for Lavinia to produce another one of him if Bacchi so wished⁶². It seems that for Lavinia at this juncture, providing Mercuriale's admirers with images of the learned doctor, was already a business in itself. Certainly the correspondence gives a very clear idea of how widely Lavinia's portraits of scholars like him were disseminated.

It is now impossible to know what became of all the portraits that Lavinia painted of Mercuriale. Romeo Galli indicated that there was a portrait of Mercuriale by Lavinia in Forlì, although he gave no other information on its existence or its precise whereabouts⁶³. Recently, a "Portrait of a doctor" in the Walters Gallery, Baltimore has been given to Lavinia and tentatively identified as Mercuriale (fig.14)⁶⁴. Stylistically, it corresponds to Lavinia's work from the late 1580s and is particularly close to her 1585 portrait of Francesco Panigarola, discussed below. The man appears to be in his forties, the same age as Mercuriale would have been in the late 1580s. The bearded man is dressed in scholars' fur-lined robes and he looks to the viewer. With his left hand he points to the book he holds in his right, an anatomical text book entitled *De Humani Corpori*, open to an illustration of a human skeleton leaning on a plinth. Behind the man there is a table on which is placed an

⁶²This letter is published in Cantaro (Milan, 1989), p.309: "...Vedendo io di non potere sodisfare al desiderio di sua Signoria in farli avere il ritratto, ovvero lucido del Sig. Mercuriale, perché quello, che fece Madonna Lavinia ch'è bellissimo, il Sig. Mercuriale la mandò a Forlì..."

⁶³Galli (Imola, 1940), p.68, n.4.

⁶⁴See Angela Ghirardi's entry for this picture in Fortunati-Pietrantonio, ed. (Milan, 1994), pp.195-196.

armillary sphere and a bronze winged *putto* attached to a vessel. Books which line part of the wall behind him have their authors' names inscribed upon their spines and include Plato, Pliny, Aristotle, Galen and Hippocrates. Whether or not this portrait is one of Girolamo Mercuriale, it certainly represents a medical man, either a practitioner or a scholar, of very similar interests and pursuits to him.

Members of the clergy, monks and friars were by the 1580s regular customers for portraits from Lavinia Fontana. In 1581 she signed and dated a ^{portrait of a} Capuchin friar who has been tentatively identified as Fra Aurelio Menochi (Modena, Galleria Estense, fig.15)⁶⁵. The friar is posed in a much more simple fashion than most of Lavinia's scholars, seated in a chair, holding a book in his right hand. This picture is in no way an austere portrait for the friar appears relaxed and he even smiles at the viewer.

Four years later, Lavinia Fontana painted a much more elaborate portrait of a clergyman which was in many ways her most sophisticated picture of a scholarly man to date (Florence, Galleria Palatina, fig.16). Fra Francesco Panigarola (1548-1592) was a member of the order of Minims and an important post-Tridentine figure. Renowned as a preacher in his native Milan and described as popular with both the laity and the learned, his fervour and eloquence eventually spurred Sixtus V to send him to Paris to preach the Catholic Church's cause against Henry IV⁶⁶. Not surprisingly, Panigarola was a particular favourite of Carlo Borromeo. He was also the prolific author of varied theological works including a number

⁶⁵Galli, (*Imola*, 1940), p.71, n.105, Cantaro, (*Milan*, 1989), p.108. Galli connects this portrait with a reference he found in "Campione Universale di S. Maria dei Servi di Bologna" (ASB) to a "*Ritratto del Padre Maestro Aurelio Menocchi per mano di Lavinia Fontana pittrice bolognese famosa*".

⁶⁶The *Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol 26 (1935) provides a useful biography of Panigarola and his achievements. ^{Rome,}

of anti-Calvinist tracts, books on dogma, and a work on how to compose a sermon (*Del modo di comporre una predica*). When Borromeo died in 1585, Panigarola wrote his funeral oration. Following his position of eminence in Borromeo's funeral preparations, he was invited, the same year, to be guest preacher in San Petronio in Bologna and while he was there, he sat for his portrait by Lavinia Fontana⁶⁷. She signed and dated this picture and the identity of the sitter and his age (thirty eight) are written on its back⁶⁸.

This portrait employs some of the same kind of iconography and compositional motifs as Lavinia's other portraits of scholars. Panigarola is seated at a desk on which there is a book, pen and ink well. However, he is not located simply in a book-lined study, instead the painting's background instead suggests that he is situated within a spiritual environment. The right hand side of the background is a long corridor, consisting of arched and rectangular doorways. That they perhaps form part of a cloister is suggested by the light source, which comes from the left, illuminating what must be open spaces along the corridor. Indeed, the use of light plays an important narrative role in this portrait. Panigarola does not have the same air of relaxed geniality as can be seen in the portrait by Lavinia of a friar from 1581. He makes eye contact with the viewer, but his face is serious and sombre though at the same

⁶⁷Panigarola's name is listed for 1585 in the "Catalogo Cronologico de' so⁹getti, che hanno predicato nella Basilica Collegiata di S. Petronio, estratto dei Registri della detta Basilica incominciando dall'anno 1393 fino all'Anno 1769", published in *Diario Bolognese Ecclesiastico e Civile per l'anno 1770*.

⁶⁸There appears to be a reference to this portrait in a letter from a Fra Filippo Barbieri to the Medici Duchess, Bianca Capello, written on December 21, 1585. Barbieri, who is anxious to recommend Lavinia to the Duchess, describes a recent visit to Lavinia's studio, where, among other portraits that he saw there, was one of the "R.P. Panie (la)". Given that the date of the painting and the letter coincide, it seems reasonable to assume that this is the portrait to which Barbieri refers. Although Panigarola's portrait is cited in a Medici inventory at the beginning of the eighteenth-century, it is impossible to assert whether there is any connection with this letter. See the appendix for a transcription of the letter.

time compassionate. He himself is placed in front of a dark wall and his body is in shadow. However, his head and his right hand are illuminated and it seems as if this light source radiates from the book on which Panigarola's right hand is placed. As a man of the cloth, the book is undoubtedly a religious tome and perhaps meant to be one of Panigarola's own works. The point is thus made visually that Panigarola receives divine illumination, his light source comes from God.

Panigarola left a written endorsement of Lavinia Fontana, as did her other illustrious clients. Romeo Galli makes reference to a source which he unfortunately does not cite properly, in which he quotes Panigarola as having written that " And it is true that, while in previous centuries women have been able to compete in letters with men, in this century Lavinia does so in the most noble art of Painting"⁶⁹.

If Lavinia painted the most illustrious of Bologna's residents and visitors she was also prepared to work for one who at one time was considered among Bologna's least illustrious, though one with a certain renown. Scipione Calcina, a banker and business man came from an old Bolognese family of merchants, doctors and lawyers⁷⁰. In the 1590s Calcina played a significant role in Bolognese business affairs, but for a great deal of the 1580s, he was clearly a *persona non grata* in Bologna. The reason for his disgrace is recorded in Ghiselli's chronicles of life in the city. On October 1, 1580, "Scipione Calcina, still absent for the nefarious sin of sodomy, pleaded guilty and paid a fine of one thousand three hundred scudi.

⁶⁹"*Et in vero che, se nei secoli adietro tall' hora si son viste le donne contrastare nelle lettere con gli huomini, in questo nostro la fa Lavinia nell' arte nobilissima della Pittura*". Galli (Imola, 1940), p.64, n. 1 cites this quotation as appearing in *Tesori Napcosti*, p.740.

⁷⁰Myriam Chiozza, *Lavinia Fontana: La ritrattistica di committenza bolognese* (tesi di laurea, Bologna, 1993-4) produced new information on the Calcina and Scipione's profession.

He was freed and pardoned"⁷¹.

Sodomy, as sex between two grown men, was a serious charge, in some instances punishable by death⁷². Rocke has demonstrated that in Renaissance Italy the commonest way of punishing wealthy perpetrators was to levy an enormous fine upon them - that of Scipione Calcina was so vast that it could be compared with the sum paid as a dowry for a girl from the Bolognese nobility⁷³. While Scipione Calcina might have received an official pardon, he clearly had to reintegrate himself back into Bolognese society. For the time being he removed himself to Ancona and then, most prudently, he began to negotiate obtaining a bride. Becoming a married man would begin to remove the tarnish from his reputation, as well as giving himself support from a wider kin group. His conduct in Bologna probably rendered a prestigious match in his native city difficult to obtain. In March 1582, from Ancona, he entered into negotiations with Nicolai Bonini of Florence for the hand of his daughter Caterina and the provisions for Caterina's dowry were settled in May of 1582⁷⁴. Caterina was to marry Scipione with a dowry of 2000 scudi, a sum not much greater than Scipione's fine for sodomy. Nicolai Bonini may have known of Scipione's crime, as, unusually, the document for the payment of the dowry states that Nicolai will begin making payments to

⁷¹Ghiselli, *Memorie Antiche di Bologna*, ms 770, BUB, vol XVII: 1580: *Adi primo Ottobre, Scipione Calcina, ancorche absente per il nefondo peccato della sodomia, supplicò, e pagato mille e tre cento scudi. Fu liberato et assoluto.*"

⁷²Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980), pp.379-382 explains that homosexuality was tolerated until the practitioners were thirty. Even then, sex between an older "active" group (14-25 years old) and a younger "passive" one (8-15) was discouraged.

⁷³Michael Rocke, "Il controllo dell'omosessualità a Firenze nel XV secolo: gli Ufficiali di Notte," *Quaderni Storici*, 66, 1987, pp.701-723.

⁷⁴"Dote di Caterina Bonini", 28 May, 1582 Archivio Ranuzzi, Cospi 1, ASB.

Scipione and pay for the upkeep of Scipione and his wife for one year but payment will begin on the day when the "marriage will be consummated in his (Nicolai's) house"⁷⁵. Caterina's father clearly wanted to make sure that his daughter's wedding was consummated in deed as well in word.

Scipione and his wife returned to Bologna in the late 1580s. Perhaps to mark his return and demonstrate his penitence for his crime and exhibit his commitment to his new wife and the renewal of family, Scipione Calcina commissioned an altarpiece for his family chapel in the church of San Giacomo Maggiore (still in situ, fig.17). The first reference to this altarpiece is in Masini, who states that it is by Lavinia Fontana⁷⁶. Calcina's decision to choose her to paint his altarpiece is probably an example of the efficacy of the family networks of patronage that the artist had established by the late 1580s. Scipione Calcina was related by marriage to one of Lavinia's most significant patrons, Laudomia Gozzadini⁷⁷. Another reason may be that Calcina wished to associate himself with women whenever he possibly could.

Calcina's chapel was dedicated to Sts. Cosma and Damian and it had been built by his ancestor Giovanni Calcina in 1408⁷⁸. When Scipione Calcina erected an altarpiece in the

⁷⁵"...et detto m. Nicolo si obbliga tenere per uno anno da cominciarsi il giorno che sara consumato il matrimonio in casa sua spese detto m.Scipione et sua moglie."

⁷⁶Masini (*Bologna, 1666*), p.175. The altarpiece is now entirely repainted following its near destruction in a fire in 1964, Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.148.

⁷⁷The mother of Laudomia Gozzadini's husband, Camillo Gozzadini, was from the Calcina family. A number of Gozzadini business documents are signed by Scipione Calcina. See Chapter Three, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone" for more on family patronage networks.

⁷⁸*Il Tempio di San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna, 1267-1967* (Bologna, 1967), p.232.

chapel in 1589, he too put up a plaque explaining the altarpiece was his commission⁷⁹. The subject matter of the painting maintains the tradition of the chapel's dedication by depicting Sts. Cosma and Damian. However, it is the figures flanking the Saints who really tell the story that Scipione Calcina is anxious to convey. Scipione himself plays a prominent role as donor. Unusually, he is placed centrally (donor figures more usually occupy a corner of an altarpiece), so his act of kneeling in obeisance plays a key role in the narrative of the work. On steps above him is Saint Catherine, identifiable by her wheel. Given that she is the namesake saint of Scipione's wife, such a choice does not seem purely arbitrary. Above her is the Virgin Mary, with the Child in her arms. Both look at Saint Catherine, the Virgin places an arm on her shoulder and Saint Catherine gestures towards Scipione Calcina. A plausible interpretation of this configuration, given the patron's history, is that through his marriage to his wife Caterina, Scipione has shown his true repentance for his crime and that it is through Caterina, who links him to the Virgin and Child that he too will be accepted into the Kingdom of Heaven. San Giacomo Maggiore was a Bolognese church frequented by many of the first families of Bologna (some of whom had chapels there) so that this altarpiece can be seen as a very public visual display by Calcina. To what extent this picture contributed to his reinstatement into Bolognese society is impossible to say, but he clearly maintained an active role in Bolognese business life throughout the 1590s⁸⁰.

Certainly, by the late 1580s, Lavinia Fontana's reputation was such that she was becoming a well established figure in literature dedicated to the deeds of women, or to the

⁷⁹See note above, p. 247. The plaque reads: "PICTAM HANC TABULAM/PIETATIS ERGO/D.VIRGINI MARIAE DEIPARE/DICAVIT/SCIPIO CALCINA BONONEINSIS/ADEMQUE RESATAUR(vit)². A.D. M.D. LXXIX."

⁸⁰Again, Myriam Chiozza has found documents dating from the 1590s to suggest that this was the case, (*Bologna*, 1993-4).

wonders of Bologna. In 1588, Francesco Amadei published *Della Nobiltà di Bologna*. This work had a general list of painters and then devoted itself to a list of the most influential families in Bolognese society and culture. Apart from Bartolomeo Passerotti (whose family comprised prominent lawyers and clerics), Prospero and Lavinia Fontana are the only painters mentioned and most of the entry is dedicated to Lavinia, describing her as "the most noble *Pittrice*, who has no equal for "diligence" in design"⁸¹. A year later, in *Dell'Eccellenza della Donna*, Hercole Marescotti praised Lavinia, along with Barbara Longhi, as an example of how the antique tradition of women painters was resurfacing in modern Italy⁸²

Lavinia Fontana also established a literary relationship with Bologna's best known and most widely published poet, Giulio Cesare Croce. In 1590, Croce published a book in verse on the *Gloria delle Donne*, which praised womens' accomplishments⁸³. He gave a number of women, including Properzia de Rossi one verse each, but he wrote three about Lavinia Fontana. He described her as "unique in the world, like the phoenix", painting as admirably as Xerxes and Apelles, as well as Michelangelo, Correggio, Titian and Raphael! In Bologna none has her equal as a portraitist, Croce claims. He concludes by saying he needs more

⁸¹Francesco Amadei, *Della Nobiltà di Bologna* (Cremona 1588), p.106: "*Della Famiglia Fontana; Prospero Fontana, Pittore Eccellentissimo, Lavinia Fontana, nobilissima Pittrice, la quale, in disegno non ha pari di diligenza.*"

⁸²Hercole Marescotti, *Dell'Eccellenza della Donna* (Fermo, 1589), p.175, "*Et in Bologna, dai migliori professori di quest'arte, non è conosciuta eccellentissima Lavinia Fontana, figliuola di Prospero Fontana, huomo ancor egli di grandissimo grido in questo essercitio?*" Other aspects of Marescotti's book are examined in chapter 3, "Gentil dame and Honeste Matrone".

⁸³Giulio Cesare Croce, *La Gloria delle Donne di Giulio Cesare Croce* (Bologna, 1590).

verses to praise all her merits⁸⁴.

Croce clearly did admire Lavinia as an artist. According to Oretti, one of her earliest works was in the Croce family chapel in their house at Rigosa near Bologna⁸⁵. Of particular significance for this chapter is the role that a portrait of him by her played in his own autobiography, which he wrote in verse. There were two editions of his autobiography, the first in 1586 and the second in 1608⁸⁶. As Girolamo Cardano had done in his autobiography of 1575, Croce felt it was important to include a description of his physiognomy. Perhaps to indicate to his reader that there was visual testimony to attest to his own description of himself, he explains that there is a portrait of himself in existence. In the 1586 edition Croce writes "And a short time ago I had my portrait painted by an excellent painter, which I have in my house so I can show it to everyone"⁸⁷. However, this section of his verse has

⁸⁴Croce's verses in praise of Lavinia Fontana run: *"Tante altre ch'in seguir filosofia/E in musica fur rare oltra misura/Ne la scultura, e ne l'Astrologia/Anchora in Aritmetica e in Pittura/Tra quali a questa estate par che sia/Gran stupor de le genti e de Natura/Lavinia Fontana, alta pittrice/Unica al mondo, come la Fenice"*
"Pinge costei così mirabilmente/ch'avaglia Apoloder, Zeusi e Apelle/Michel Agnel tra gli altri sì eccellente/Il Corregio, Titian e Raffaello/E nel ritrar sì rara e diligente/Che non ha pari in questi parti o in quelle/Tal c'hormai rissonar s'ode il suo nome/Per tutto dove il sol spiega le chiami"
"Vorrei s'io havessi vena alzarmi tanto/Ne le lode di questa ch'io facei/Splender per tutto il suo gran merito, e'l vanto/Degno di Palme, e immortal Trossei/Ma Perché a tanta impresa uguale il canto/Non è, qui tacerò, perché di lei/ Canteran in altri versi più sonori/I sommi pregi, e i suoi sublimi honori".

⁸⁵Oretti, B 124, BCB. *"Dipinse ancora una tavolina per la Cappellina domestica a Rigosa, pare dipinta adesso col nome l'Anno 1575."* Galli (Imola, 1940), believed this picture to be the painting of the "Holy Family with St. John the Baptist and St. Elizabeth" now in Dresden, pp.65-65.

⁸⁶ The two original *Descrittione della vita del Croce* and subsequent editions are described in Monique Rouch, ed., *Storie di Vita Popolare nelle Canzoni di Piazza di G.C. Croce, Fame fatica e mascherate nel '500* (Bologna, 1973).

⁸⁷See Rouch (Bologna, 1973), p.29: The 1586 edition verse reads: *"E poco tempio ch'io me fei ritrare/a un pittor eccellente, e'l mio ritratto/ho in casa ch'io lo posso a*

changed by the 1608 edition, when it reads "And a short time ago I had my portrait made by Lavinia Fontana and my portrait has been taken to live in Poland"⁸⁸. Clearly, for Croce between the first and second editions of his autobiography, two things had occurred to show how his fame had increased: he had now been painted by Lavinia Fontana, by then known to all as the painter of *uomini famosi* and as it was with other scholars and famous men, his likeness was desired by men far away from his native city. The difference in the two editions could thus attest to Fontana's growing renown.

However, that Lavinia Fontana came to learn the worth of pretty words and deem them of providing little practical value, is evinced by her treatment of Muzio Manfredi. Manfredi was the poet who had known nothing of Lavinia in 1575, when he spoke of Barbara Longhi's merits as a woman artist⁸⁹. However, in 1591, he wrote angrily to Lavinia declaring she had reneged on her promise to send him her self-portrait⁹⁰. He was particularly irate as he had written a poem in praise of her, which had been published in a book of one hundred

ognun mostrare..."

⁸⁸"*E poco tempio ch'io mi fei ritrare a Lavinia Fontana, e'l mio ritratto/fu portato in Polonia ad abitare.*"

⁸⁹See Chapter One, "The Making of a Woman Artist"

⁹⁰Manfredi's letter to Lavinia was originally published in *Lettere di Muzio Manfredi* (Venice, 1608) and printed in Cantaro (Milan, 1989), p.309. It reads "*Primo per lettere d'altri, e poi con parole proprie V.S. mi promise un ritratto di sua mano di de medesima; la qual doppia promessa, giunta col desiderio d'avere un esempio di bella, e raramente virtuosa donna, ebbe tal forza in me, che siccome avuto l'avessi, ne feci un madrigale, e stampatolo con gli altri cento miei, a V.S. mandai il libro, credendomi certo di riavere in risposta il desiderato ritratto. Ma pure non altro ebbi, che nuova promessa. Deh, Signora Lavinia, no sia più lungo il pagamento di cotesto debito. I tre termini son passati, e se ormai non mi salderete la ragione, non vi avrete né a dolere né a meravigliare, se io, per essere finalmente soddisfatto, ricorrero con più aspra petizione a più rigoroso tribunale, che quello non è di cortesia; e baciovi quella mano, che il debito ha da pagare.*"

madrigals. He had sent Lavinia the book and had felt certain that it would cause her to immediately send him her picture. He clearly regarded this as a fitting exchange. His words enhanced her reputation, her picture swelled and added value to his collection. She had not sent him her portrait and Manfredi was threatening to subject her to "harsher petitions" and "more rigorous tribunals" if she did not do so. Lavinia Fontana was unmoved by the suggestion of exchanging a portrait for a poem at this stage of her career when she was confident in her ability to secure as much business as she wanted and could determine her price.

Lavinia Fontana maintained her relationship with scholarly men throughout her life in Bologna. Ulisse Aldrovandi recorded a visit to her house in one of his notebooks, which took place on January 10, 1600, where he met "Capitano m. Giustiniano and M. Aurelio pittore"⁹¹. Aldrovandi's comments provide a glimpse of Lavinia Fontana as a hostess in her own right, bringing together like-minded people and in this way, continuing the tradition begun by her father, of the Fontana household as a meeting place for those involved in Bologna's intellectual and cultural life. One cannot gain from his brief record any idea of how Lavinia Fontana mingled with the famous men on such occasions, or whether they occurred regularly as under her father's auspices. Did she conduct herself like a *salonnière*, existing merely to allow famous men a structured environment in which to share their learning, herself assuming a self-effacing role, or did she see herself as their full equal, a

⁹¹Ms Aldrovandi 136, tomo XXX, c.165, "*Observatium Tomus Trigesimus 1600 Die 10 Januari inceptus: Ricordo che in casa della Sig.ra Lavinia Fontana pittrice, Capitano M. Giustiniano et M. Aurelio pittore*". Giuseppe Olmi in "Arte e Natura nel Cinquecento Bolognese: Ulisse Aldrovandi e la Rappresentazione Scientifica" in *Le Arti a Bologna e in Emilia dal XVI-XVII* (CIHA, Bologna, 1982), p.166, note 41, suggests that "M. Aurelio Pittore" would be Aurelio Passerotti. Passerotti did in fact publish a lace pattern book with the De Bonardis printing house.

phenomenon in her own right? Certainly the men of learning were of critical importance to Lavinia in her establishment of herself as a painter of distinction and talent whose works transcended Bologna and hence they empowered her with an international reputation. Within the community of Bologna itself, the paintings for scholars that Lavinia produced in the early part of her career demonstrated her ability to capture a likeness and the appropriate setting and ensured the solidity of her reputation, transforming her into a personage worthy of a *laude*. In material terms, perhaps what mattered most was that her reputation in painting famous men facilitated her next move up the ladder of commercial success, to be painter to the noblewomen of Bologna.

CHAPTER THREE

GENTILDAME AND HONESTE MATRONE: Representing the Bolognese Noblewoman

During the early 1580s, Lavinia Fontana climbed yet another rung on the ladder of commercial success. She became established as a painter to the Bolognese nobility and to female members of the nobility in particular. Malvasia describes this significant aspect of her client base in the following terms:

"For some time, all the Ladies of the City would compete in wishing to have her close to them, treating her and embracing her with extraordinary demonstrations of love and respect, considering themselves fortunate to have seen her on the street, or to have meetings in the company of the virtuous young woman; the greatest thing that they desired would be to have her paint their portraits, prizing them in such a way that in our day neither a Vandyck (*sic*) or a Monsù Giusto could charge a higher price..."¹

Malvasia paints a vivid picture of the relationship between Lavinia Fontana and female members of the Bolognese nobility. He writes of women whose wealth is sufficient to allow them to exercise purchasing power, who are so excited by the presence of this woman artist that they turn her into a local celebrity. They clamour for her artistic services, vying with each other to obtain them. Thus they turn a Lavinia Fontana portrait into such a mark of fashion within their circles that the artist was able to command the kind of fees that Malvasia could only compare with those charged in the seventeenth-century by Van Dyck or the Medici court painter Justus Sustermans.

¹*"Garreggiarono tutte le Dame della Città in volerla per qualche tempo presso di loro, trattenendola, e accarezzandola con dimostrazione di straordinario amore e di rispetto, riputandosi a fortuna l'esser vedute su i corsi, e nelle radunanze in compagnia della virtuosa giovane, ; ne maggior cosa desiderando, che venire da essa ritratte, premiandola in modo, che maggior prezzo a nostri giorni non siasi usato con un Vandyck, con un Monsù Giusto..."*

C.C. Malvasia (*Bologna, 1678/1971*), p.146.

Not only do Malvasia's comments help in providing insight into the identity of yet another branch of Lavinia Fontana's customers, but they also offer the reader a view (albeit one via a secondary source) of the lives of Bolognese noblewomen in the late sixteenth-century. These women are clearly not confined to the family *palazzo*, as in Malvasia's words they are hoping to catch a glimpse of Lavinia "on the streets". They are apparently able to make autonomous financial decisions and they have a sufficiently developed taste for painting that they recognize in Lavinia Fontana an ideal painter: not only was she talented, but she was well bred and educated. Significantly as well, she was a woman so that any prolonged contact with her would in no way be a cause for scandal of the kind a noblewoman cultivating a relationship with a male painter might incur. Furthermore, the social relations between these Bolognese "Ladies of the City" were such that, in Malvasia's language, they competed with each other for her attention. Such a statement establishes a sense of intimate rivalry between them, gives these women a social identity and a set of relationships beyond that of daughter, wife or mother. They evoke a consciousness of a female audience and visual identity.

The most compelling available documentary evidence establishing the development of a relationship between Lavinia Fontana and Bolognese noblewomen are the records made by Gian Paolo Zappi in the *Libro di Battismo* of his and Lavinia's children of the names of the Bolognese noblewomen who stood as godmothers to Fontana-Zappi children. These noblewomen included Leona Bovi Paleotti (the wife of Gabriele's humanist senator brother Camillo), Laudomia Gozzadini, Costanza Bianchetti Bargellini, and Elisabetta Pepoli, all members of the first families of Bologna². There are further

²Gian Paolo Zappi, *Libro di Battismo*, BCI.

clues which suggest that Lavinia also marketed herself to appeal to a noble female clientèle. Fra Filippo Barbieri, writing to Bianca Capello about Lavinia, describes her as *gratiosa* and most tellingly remarks that she did not work as an artist because she needed to, as she was noble, rich and virtuous³. Of course, in Bologna, Lavinia could not absolutely pass for a noble, although her marriage to Gian Paolo Zappi had enhanced her status. However, from Barbieri's comments one can infer that her manners and her decorum clearly gave her an air of breeding that would have been very attractive to the Bolognese female nobility - a sensation that Lavinia Fontana was almost (if not quite) one of them.

Despite the existence of Gian Paolo's *Libro di Battismo*, the nature of Lavinia's *oeuvre* and Barbieri's words of praise, more evidence is needed however to probe the relationship between Lavinia and the *gentildonne bolognesi*. It is not enough to know some of their names, one must also ask who they were, what were their financial resources, how does Lavinia's work reflect or enhance an understanding of the lives they led and perhaps most importantly, what role did they play in contemporary Bolognese society which, inadvertently or not, encouraged them to act as patrons of the arts?

It is impossible to describe any city in early modern Europe by reference to the freedom of its women, but there are aspects to Bolognese life and mentalities that suggest that a noblewoman, placed in the right circumstances in life, enjoyed a more public existence than she did living elsewhere in Italy. For example, it was recognised by the Bolognese that women did have minds that were possible to train, since from the thirteenth-century, albeit under certain restrictions, women were allowed to attend the

³"Lei non lavora in questa Arte per bisogno, ma per suo disposto, perché è Nobile, ricca et virtuosa". See appendix for full transcription of this document.

University. The study of canon law and jurisprudence was forbidden them, but they were permitted to study such subjects as history and literature, botany and probably astrology.

An indication of who those sixteenth-century Bolognese women were who went to the University, or who were renowned in the city for their learning, is provided both by Masini in *Bologna Perlustrata* and by Francesco Agostino della Chiesa in his *Teatro delle Donne Letterate* of 1620⁴. Della Chiesa's list includes some women whom one might expect to be educated, such as Achille Bocchi's daughter Costanza, but there were others who were clearly from noble families. These included such women as Diamante Dolfi who was a poetess, Giovanna Bianchetti, described as being able to speak Greek, Latin, German and Polish correctly, as well as being most learned in philosophy, Giovanna de Santi, originally from Correggio, but married to a Bolognese nobleman, who combined writing poems in Latin with the ability to engage in arguments of the *sottilissimi* philosophy and Orsina Grassa della Volta who was well instructed in Logic, Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy. All of these women cited in this text were evidently married; their learned tendencies had neither been suppressed nor made them immediate candidates for convent life. Instead, their learning seems to have been viewed as a source of pride for their families and associates.

Such acknowledgement of womens' capacities for learning may also influence the degree of financial control women seem to have had in Bologna. The laws governing the transmission and control of money by noblewomen did not differ greatly from that of any other Italian city at the time. Upon marriage, they were given a dowry by their

⁴Masini (*Bologna*, 1666), 1, p.666. Francesco Agostino della Chiesa, *Teatro delle Donne Letterate* (Mondovi, 1620) is a series of biographical essays on learned and accomplished women from antiquity to the present day. Many of the women mentioned are either Bolognese, or educated in Bologna.

fathers, thereby renouncing any claim to further patrimonial inheritance: the management of these funds was usually given to the husband who deducted from the usufruct^h his wife's living expenses and passed the rest on to her. Such money, together with any other bequests from other sources could then be spent in whatever way she chose⁵. Indeed, many Bolognese women seemed to take an interest in how their money was invested, and were engaged in land deals, or the purchasing of annuities. There were some men whose confidence in their wives' financial sense was such that they left them as the trustees of their estates when they left Bologna for periods of time. There was a supplementary income source to which some Bolognese women had access. Bolognese women frequently bequeathed small sums and artifacts to their female friends or elected, if childless, to leave money, usually to the women of their families of origin, thus enhancing female purchasing power⁶.

There was then, in Bologna, a class of woman who potentially had education, authority, money and spare time, a fact which did not escape the notice of Gabriele Paleotti, anxious to harness such resources for the good of the city. On December 17, 1577, he gave a long sermon (published in *Episcopale Bononiensis*), ostensibly directed

⁵There are numerous studies on marriages and dowries for Italian women in the early modern period. One fundamental source are the chapters entitled "Il matrimonio" and "Donne e doti" in Nino Tamassia, *La Famiglia italiana nei secoli Decimoquinto e Decimosesto* (Rome, 1911). For issues of legal technicalities concerning women, marriage and dowries in Renaissance Italy, see the chapters entitled "Women, Marriage and *Patria Potestas* in Late Medieval Florence" and "Some Ambiguities of Female Inheritance Ideology in the Renaissance" in Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women, Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago, 1991) and Niccolai Tommaseo, *Dei Sussidi Dotali e dell'Utilità Loro*, (Florence, 1845).

⁶For a study of female legacies among the Bolognese patriciate, see Gabriella Zarri, "Ginevra Gozzadini dall'Armi, Gentildonna Bolognese (1520/27-1567)" in *Rinascimento al Femminile*, ed. Ottavia Niccoli (Bari, 1991), pp.117-142.

towards the wealthier women of Bologna, in which he gave them advice and instruction on almost every aspect of their lives⁷. He discussed the marriage ceremony, the way women should dress, their moral behaviour, how they should honour their relatives, but what concerned him most was how women should spend and manage their time. Perhaps not surprisingly, he was anxious that they spend as much time as possible everyday in church, encouraging them to go to Vespers in particular, to public orations, to prayers and sermons. The "rest of the day" should be engaged in "spiritual things". Paleotti wanted women to teach in Schools of Christian Doctrine for Girls (hence putting the benefits of their education back into the community)⁸. Women should visit sick women and the very poor of their parish. He was very specific about ways in which women could enhance their spiritual and financial efficacy by joining forces with each other. He encouraged them to join "charitable congregations" (confraternities) of women, such as those for the *Butte del Baraccano*, the *Butte di Santa Marta*, and the *Ospedale of the Mendicanti* and the *Bastardini*. He also suggests that they form their own informal groups to raise funds for needy religious institutions.

That women's use and management of their time is an important issue for Paleotti is revealed when he advises them not to linger in the streets or the *piazze*, or to undertake "useless" visits, or anything else that is a "waste" of time⁹. Quite inadvertently, Paleotti gives a modern day reader quite a clear picture of how at least some Bolognese women

⁷Gabriele Paleotti, *Episcopale Bononiensis* (Bologna, 1580), pp.82-92.

⁸See Chapter Six, "*Children, Art and Pedagogy*" for further discussion of the Schools for Christian Doctrine.

⁹"...fuggendo da ogni modo le piazze, i corsi, e visite inutile, con perdimento di tempo", G. Paleotti, (Bologna, 1580), p.89.

probably spent some of their time, engaged in the kind of public activity that the energetic Tridentine Bishop saw as worthless. These remarks do help to establish the fact that Bolognese women did have a public, social identity, endorsing Malvasia's remark that noblewomen were anxious to catch a glimpse of Lavinia Fontana on the street.

Gabriele Paleotti himself was happy to work with women to benefit the community. Together with a philanthropic merchant, Bonifazio delle Balle, he joined forces with a wealthy widow, Pazienza Barbieri to fund and erect a refuge for penitent prostitutes, the Casa del Soccorso di San Paolo, originally called the *Malmaritate* which existed until 1729¹⁰. When he gave instructions and suggestions as to how he wished to see his wealthy female congregation spend their time he built on to what was to a degree already established religious behaviour for Bolognese women. The church was a focus of social activity for many women. A drawing for a new interior for San Petronio (Bologna, Museo del Duomo) ascribed to Peruzzi from the 1540s shows groups of women strolling and talking (rather than praying) together in the cathedral. Branches of male confraternities for women and female confraternities already existed; in the middle of the sixteenth-century, women had been vociferous about upholding their rights to membership of the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Pietà¹¹. The governing board of the Putte di Santa Marta was made up of twelve men and twelve women. There were

¹⁰Lucia Ferrante, "Honor Regained: Women in the Casa del Soccorso di San Paolo in Sixteenth-Century Bologna", *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective*, ed. E. Muir and G. Ruggiero (Baltimore, 1990), pp.46-72. For more on Pazienza Barbieri, see Chapter 5, *La Vita Vedovile*.

¹¹Nicolas Terpstra, "Women in the Brotherhood: Gender, Class and Politics in Renaissance Bolognese Confraternities" in *Renaissance and Reformation*, XXVI, 3 (1990), pp.193-212. In 1547, a group of women lead by Mona Lucia Bolza demanded that they receive all the same confraternal privileges as men in the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Pietà.

three women on the governing board for the Putte di Santa Maria del Baraccano. Certainly, what Paleotti wanted to see was even more charitable and spiritual activity among upper class Bolognese women and the result of his exhortations was an increasingly frequent female presence in such activities. For example, by the end of the sixteenth-century, female members outstripped male members of the popular Confraternity of Santa Maria del Soccorso¹².

Not only did women join confraternities in greater numbers, but they increasingly left money to charities and religious institutions in their wills and at least two women bequeathed pictures to charitable homes for girls. In 1593, Ginevra Zampieri, the widow of Giacomo Maria Bargellini expressly left "to the putte of Santa Maria del Baraccano, a large icon depicting three figures, the Blessed Virgin, her son and Saint Joseph, with the arms and insignia of our house"¹³. In 1598, Flaminia Mangini Vittini left "to the *putte della Vergini nelle Lame*... a large icon of the glorious Virgin Mary who holds her son and our Saviour in her arms..." Along with the picture, Flaminia bequeathed the *putte* two alabaster candlesticks and two gilded angels. However, the gift came with a proviso; Flaminia asked that every Saturday the girls would stand in front of the picture, say prayers to Our Lady and a *de profundis* for the souls of Flaminia and her first husband

¹²The *Capitoli della Compagnia della Beata Vergine del Soccorso* indicates that between 1570 and 1605, 200 men joined the Confraternity, and more than 300 women. Fondo de Maniale, Compagnia della Beata Vergine del Soccorso, 7/6340, ASB.

¹³2 January, 1593, Testamento della Nobile Matrona Ginevra di Girolamo Zampieri, Vedova di Giacomo Maria Bargellini, Archivio Ranuzzi-Bianchi, Seg. 8, *Istrumenti 1588-1599*: "*Lascia alle pauperis puellis (putte) de Santa Marie del Baraccano una Ancona magna cum tribus figuris Beata Vergine, filios et Sanct Joseph, cum armis et insignibus domus nostris*"

Ridolfo¹⁴.

Ginevra Zampieri Bargellini and Flaminia Mangini Vittini were obviously acting as good citizens of Bologna, the kind worthy of Paleotti's approval, although mindful of their own salvation. They, as wealthier members of Bolognese society, are giving poor girls religious paintings for their own use (these are not pictures to furnish family chapels). But both do ensure that the recipient of the gift is not forgotten: Ginevra by donating a picture upon which her family's coat-of-arms is inscribed, (which was a practise disapproved of by Paleotti)¹⁵; Flaminia by requesting the girls say prayers for the souls of herself and her husband. Nonetheless, such gifts demonstrate that Bolognese women were aware of both the virtue of philanthropy and the power of images.

In many ways, Lavinia Fontana's *Crucifixion with the Women at the Foot of the Cross*, now in the church of San Antonio Abate in Bologna (fig.18), epitomises the spiritual and philanthropic relationship between Bolognese women and the church of the Catholic Reformation. The women seen at the foot of the cross are, after all, those who gave succour and support to Christ and his teachings: Mary his mother, Mary Magdalen, Mary the wife of Cleophas, among others, described in the gospels as having followed him and ministered to him. It seems that Lavinia Fontana executed her picture of this

¹⁴31 March, 1598, Testamento di Flaminia Mangini Vittini, Archivio Fantuzzi-Ceretoli, *Istrumenti* 45, No 33 ..."*Lascia alle putte della Madonna nelle Vergine nella contrada delle Lame della Città di Bologna una ancona depinta de nova con la Immagine della gloriosa Vergine Maria che tiene in braccio il suo figliolo et Salvator Nostro, et duoi candelieri d'Alabastro, duoi Angeli dorati, le quale cose tutte essa Testatrice desidera che sono tenute et conservate con devotione et reverentia doppo la sua morte ogni Sabato d'ogni settimana cantare le laudi della Madonna dinanzi alla sudetta Immagine con il fine di esse laude dire il de profundis per l'anima di essa testatrice et del sudetto Ridolfo il suo primo marito..*"

¹⁵Gabriele Paleotti dedicated a chapter to his disapproval of this practise (*Bologna, 1582, Bari, 1960*)

scene some time during the early 1580s for the Jesuit church of Santa Lucia.

The most ambitious charitable endeavour undertaken by women in sixteenth-century Bologna was their efforts to establish the Jesuits. It seems unlikely that a Jesuit presence would ever have firmly rooted itself in Bologna had it not been for the efforts of wealthy women. As letters and documents indicate, from the moment that Ignatius Loyola sent Francis Xavier and Nicolas Bobadilla to Bologna in 1537, initially to preach in the streets and hear confessions, wealthy Bolognese women, in particular two widows, Margherita dal Giglio and Violante Gozzadini made it apparent that they desired a permanent Jesuit foundation, with its sympathetic and charismatic brethren, to settle in Bologna¹⁶. The Society of Jesus exploited this eagerness and chose to award the title, "Mother of the Church" to the woman who gave them the most money¹⁷. The Jesuits came to occupy the disused church of Santa Lucia and by the 1540s, Padre Claude Joy was so popular in Bologna, that Santa Lucia had to be closed during confession, because it became so packed with women¹⁸. Initially, female fervour for the Jesuits was so strong that the male population of Bologna was apparently highly suspicious of the religious order and the influence they exercised over women. However, Gabriele Paleotti was a strong Jesuit supporter and made their leader in Bologna, Francesco Palmio, his second-

¹⁶The sources for the establishment of the Jesuits in Bologna and the role which women played are, Gabriella Zarri, "La Compagnia di Gesù a Bologna: dall'origine alla stabilizzazione (1546-1568)" in *Dall'Isola della Città: I Gesuiti a Bologna*, eds. G.P. Brizzi and A. M. Matteucci (Bologna, 1986), pp.119-124 and Hugh Rahner, ed. *Saint Ignatius Loyola. Letters to Women*, (London, 1960), which contains translations of some of the correspondence between Loyola and some of the Bolognese female followers of the Jesuits.

¹⁷Rahner (*London, 1960*), p.212, Zarri (*Bologna, 1986*), p.120.

¹⁸Rahner (*London, 1960*), p.211.

in-command on a secret committee to rout out Bolognese church corruption¹⁹. Eventually, Bologna as a whole was won over to the Jesuits, not least by their preaching and by the beginning of the seventeenth-century, they had established themselves as the primary educators of the children of the upper-classes²⁰.

By the 1550s, Jesuit popularity among women was such that Santa Lucia was too small to house the huge congregation they attracted and the brethren began to make plans to find another church. However, the women who supported them had grown attached to the church of Santa Lucia itself and they begged the brotherhood to remain there. These women offered to pay for the building of adjacent houses to accommodate the order and they said they would re-furbish and re-decorate the church. Around 1556 a committee (which was ongoing for the rest of the century) of twelve women was established²¹. These women promised to meet and oversee all the necessary expenses for this project and any other enterprises the Jesuits wished to undertake in Bologna. As Carolyn Valone has demonstrated, such activity was in keeping with womens' relationships with the Jesuits in other Italian cities, especially in Rome, where noblewomen had expressed their support for the Jesuits by embarking upon elaborate

¹⁹ Prodi (*Rome, 1967*), vol II, p.60. Interestingly, Francesco Palmio's brother is described by Prodi as Carlo Borromeo's *braccio destro*, p.30.

²⁰The Collegio di Santa Lucia was initially founded under the patronage of Pope Gregory XIII, Zarri (*Bologna, 1986*), p.123. See also Giancarlo Angelozzi, "Collegi, Congregazione, Missioni popolari: un progetto di disciplinamento sociale", pp.125-130, Angelozzi and Alberto Preti, "Le scuole di via Castiglione: dai Gesuiti al Liceo statale", pp.131-144 and Gian Paolo Brizzi, "I Gesuiti e i seminari per la formazione della classe dirigente", pp.145-155 in this same volume.

²¹Rahner (*London, 1960*), pp.218-129 gives more details of this undertaking.

building and decorative schemes for chapels in their churches²².

The church of Santa Lucia is like that of San Giacomo Maggiore in that there was a great flourish^{ing} of artistic patronage on the part of the Bolognese nobility in both churches in the last decades of the sixteenth-century²³. San Giacomo had paintings by Prospero Fontana, Ercole Proccacini, Bartolomeo Passerotti and the highly sought after Sicilian painter Tommaso Laureti. Santa Lucia contained works by Denis Calvaert, Lorenzo Sabbatini and Orazio Sammachini²⁴. Certainly, any enthusiasm expressed by potential patrons for decorating chapels in Santa Lucia was encouraged by Francesco di Palmio, whose opinion on religious imagery was so respected by Gabriele Paleotti that he used him as the "spiritual" advisor for the *Discorso sulle immagini sacre e profano*, a work which Palmio admired greatly.²⁵ Unfortunately, unlike San Giacomo, there is almost nothing left of a Santa Lucia archive or a record of Jesuit activity in late sixteenth-

²²Carolyn Valone, "Piety and Patronage: Women and the Early Jesuits" in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, ed. E. Ann Matter and John Coackley (Philadelphia, 1994), pp.157-181.

²³Renato Roli, "I quadri e i dipinti murali de' gli altari dal Cinquecento all 'Ottocento" in *Il Tempio di San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna* (Bologna, 1967).

²⁴Cavazzoni gives a list of paintings hanging in chapels in Santa Lucia in 1603. They included three pictures by Lorenzo Sabbatini (described as "Lorenzino"), including the painting above the high altar (believed to be the "Virgin and Child with Sts. Agatha and Lucy, now in San Antonio Abate), a "Circumcision" and "St. Dominic and St. Petronio", a "St. Vincent" by Orazio Sammachini and two paintings of the Madonna by Denis Calvaert. There was also the "Procession of St. Gregory by Federico Zuccaro which had been placed in the Jesuit church following its rejection by Santa Maria del Barraccano. See Fiorella Frisoni, "Le pale d'altare dei Gesuiti in Bologna" in Brizzi, Mateucci, eds. (*Bologna*, 1986), pp.95-105.

²⁵Prodi (*Rome*, 1967), vol II, p.531. Prodi cites a letter to Paleotti from Palmio (note 14), written on January 30, 1578, after Palmio had read a draft of the *discorso*, in which he says "*Ho trascorso la scrittura, o discorso della pittura, e mi piace sopra modo, et spero che habbi da piacere, et fare tanto frutto quanto cosa che V.S. Ill.ma habbi fatto mettere in stampa*".

century Bologna, so the surprisingly deep knowledge that exists of the patrons of San Giacomo does not exist for Santa Lucia. Knowledge today of the family names of individual chapels in Santa Lucia comes from Cavazzoni's manuscript of 1603, but there is no indication of the actual patrons.

During the seventeenth-century, there was some conflicting opinion over the authorship of the "Crucifixion" which belonged to the Jesuit church (fig.18). In 1603, Francesco Cavazzoni described it as a work by Prospero Fontana, an attribution that Masini also gave to the work in his *Bologna Perlustrata* in 1668. However, ten years later, Malvasia corrected him, saying that the "Crucifixion" was by Lavinia, not Prospero Fontana²⁶. While there may have been some collaboration between father and daughter on the painting - living in the same house, they probably shared the same workshop, Malvasia's attribution seems reasonable on a number of stylistic grounds that suggest the painting is closer to Lavinia's, rather than her father's work. The sombre sober style of the painting is more reminiscent of Lavinia's work than that of her father, who favoured a more rhetorical approach. Characteristic of Lavinia Fontana's work, too, is the close attention paid to the psychological expressions on the faces of the mourners at the foot of the cross. The most conclusive proof however that this work is Lavinia's is the similarity between the face and hairstyle of the woman on the right tending Mary to that of Martha in "Christ in the House of Martha and Mary", which suggests that in the "Crucifixion" painting Lavinia is also depicting her as Martha, for within Church tradition, Martha was present at Christ's death. In addition, the Magdalen embracing the cross has

²⁶F. Cavazzoni, *Pitture et sculture et altre cose notabili che sono in Bologna e dove si trovano*, Ms. B 1343, c.11, Biblioteca Comunale, Bologna. Masini (*Bologna, 1666*), p.120 and Malvasia (*Bologna, 1686*), p.256.

the same long crimped hair as the Mary in the Santa Marta painting and the Mary Magdalen in Lavinia's *Noli me Tangere* from 1581 (Florence, Uffizi).

Also apparent in the altarpiece are some of the compositional weaknesses that Lavinia Fontana displayed when dealing with large-scale canvases relatively early on in her career: The structural relationship between the mourners and the crucified bodies is an uneasy one: the exaggerated height of the crosses distances the dying from the mourning figures below. However, what might be perceived to be a compositional weakness on the part of the artist, has an unusual effect on the viewer. The exaggerated height of the cross removes Christ from the direct picture plane, so that one is obliged to focus, not on the Christ figure, but on the women gathered at the foot of the cross. They form a tightly knit group dominating the foreground of the picture. The Bolognese women who were the followers, financiers, and stalwart supporters of the Jesuits who looked upon this picture were confronted with the women helpers and financiers of Jesus Christ - their original role models.

While it is unlikely that the heads of the women at the foot of the cross are actual depictions of the women involved in Jesuit patronage, the intensity of their expressions, and the details of their physiognomy gives them an almost portrait-like quality. The convention for groups of women involved in charitable concerns to have themselves painted together, best illustrated in the seventeenth-century by Frans Hals' groups of Haarlem regentesses, was not replicated in Catholic countries and certainly, the Jesuits would not have encouraged such an undertaking. However, they were far from averse from encouraging emulation of those women who mourned Christ, and the women in the "Crucifixion" painting act as a kind of symbol and metaphor for the women involved in funding the Jesuit enterprise. This picture can be understood to function as a kind of

historicised group portrait.

Who was the patron of this altarpiece, whose subject matter relates so fittingly with the history of relationship between the Jesuits and Bolognese noblewomen? If Cavazzoni, while mistaken about the artist, was at least correct about the name of the chapel in which the painting was placed initially, then it originally belonged to the Balzani family. The Jesuit archive in Bologna has few documents remaining for the late part of the sixteenth-century, but there are references in account books to a Portia Balzani. It seems possible that she chose the painting, its subject matter and its artist in recognition of what women over the previous decades had done to ensure a Jesuit presence in Bologna.

Female religious artistic patronage could clearly provide an important part of womens' public spiritual identity. An analysis of widows' religious patronage involving Lavinia Fontana and her holy paintings designed with young girls in mind will be offered in following chapters. The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to an analysis of that aspect of the relationship between Lavinia Fontana and the Bolognese female nobility that Malvasia deemed to be most profitable for her, that of portrait painting.

Portraits could be used to mark any stage in a woman's life, that of bride, married society matron, wife and mother, widow. Over the course of her career, Lavinia Fontana would be commissioned with commemorating all of these. Amongst the corpus of her work are a number of portraits of young women, some no more than teenagers, who are usually exquisitely dressed, their pose decorous, their expression serious. They are presented in such a way as to suggest that a significant occasion is being marked by the production of their portraits. For most women of this age, that occasion could only mean marriage. In Fontana's portraits of young women, it is possible to discern various aspects

common to them all. The "Principessa" (Udine, private collection, fig.19), and the two young women tentatively identified as a member of the Bentivoglio family and Giovanna Oretti Gozzadini (whereabouts of both paintings unknown, figs.20 and 21), are young women probably in their late teens or early twenties. They are all richly dressed and bejeweled. Their expressions are serious, and despite the splendour of their regalia, there is a sense of innocence, a virginal quality to these young women. None wear rings on the wedding finger, and the Udine "Principessa" and the woman possibly from the Bentivoglio family make gestures signifying fidelity by placing their hands on their hearts, perhaps "plighting their troth".

Whatever their social status, for most young women in the sixteenth-century, marriage was the first major, and, by universal consensus, the most significant event in their lives. Even a nun was made a "bride" of Christ - she exchanged vows with her celestial bridegroom when she took the veil. For the girl of wealthy parentage in early modern Italy, marriage was the culmination of a process of strategic planning that her parents may have conducted over several years.

One of the initial steps in the formation of a marriage was the constitution of a dowry. The dowry not only represented the bride's stake in her father's wealth and marked her renunciation of any entitlement to his property on his death, but was also intended to maintain her in marriage, and to then pass intact to her upon the death of her spouse. At that moment, she might only choose to take the interest on the sum to live on, and in Bologna, she could dispose as she chose of her dowry in her will. None of these benefits may have given her any cause for rejoicing in her lifetime, but it did mean that every young noblewoman had a net worth. Families were adjudged by the dowries that they could give their daughter(s), and the alliances such dowries purchased were the

primary signifier of the ^{status of the} family in wider society. They consolidated houses and interest groups, and hence were intrinsic to political power structures.

In Bologna, families maintained a carefully structured spousal network. Rarely were marriages arranged with a non-Bolognese family, and when they were, it was usually with a family who had long-standing ties to Bologna²⁷. As a general rule in early modern Bologna, particular groups of families preferred to marry only members of one another's families²⁸. Strictly speaking, alliances of this nature, where one might be marrying a first, second, or third cousin, were not allowed by the Church, as this sort of marriage was within prohibited degrees. However, the Church itself could, against a large sum of money, grant a dispensation, and the patriciate were frequent users of this provision²⁹.

By taking such measures, the balance of power was carefully preserved and maintained in Bologna. Family wealth, in the form of the dowry, would never travel too far from its original starting point, but would circulate within a particular network. In fact, these networks were advantageous to the career of Lavinia Fontana herself. All of the families for whom she painted during the course of her career in Bologna were connected to one another in some way. Bentivoglios married Capraras, Boncompagnis

²⁷These families included the Alidosi from Imola, and the Caccianemici who had both Bolognese and Roman branches. For a survey of how marriage and power structures functioned in early modern Italy, see Gérard Delile, "La Parenté et L'Alliance", in *Famille et Propriété dans Le Royaume de Naples (XVe-XIX Siècle)*, (Rome-Paris, 1985).

²⁸For example, the Boncompagni, the Bargellini, and the Pepoli frequently intermarried. For further details of family relationships in Bologna, consult Pompeo Scipione Dolfi, *Cronologia delle Famiglie Bolognesi*, (Bologna, 1770, reprinted 1990).

²⁹J.Gaudemet, "Legislation canonique et attitudes séculières à l'égard du lien matrimonial au XV^e siècle", *Dix-septième siècle*, 102, 1974, pp.15-30.

married Bargellinis, Aldrovandis formed alliances with Hercolanis, Ruinis with Pepolis, Gozzadinis with Isolanis. Even within the relatively small city centre of Bologna, they never travelled very far from each other. Almost all of the families had palaces on the Strada Maggiore and an indication of the change in Lavinia's client base is that some time in the late 1580s she and her family moved from the Via Galliera to the district surrounding the Strada Maggiore.

The average sum of a dowry for a girl from the nobility in late sixteenth-century Bologna increased from between four and six thousand lire in the 1570s to around twelve thousand lire in 1590³⁰. By contrast, a worthy "povera donzella", in 1580, might receive fifty lire from a charitable institution in order that she might marry³¹. The noble girl's money would usually be paid out by her family to the chosen husband over a period of time from the beginning of the marriage onwards. In addition to the cash sum, the bride was fitted out with a *corredo*, a trousseau consisting of any number of items - pieces of linen, expensive clothing and jewelry - which would be contained in a *cassone* (a wedding chest) and which could be further enriched by paintings and furnishings. The *corredo* was considered to be a part of bride wealth, in the same way as the cash part of the dowry. Articles were provided by either the bride's parents or guardians, and could be further augmented by her future husband and his family, in the form of gifts. Both

³⁰These sums of money for the dowry of women from wealthy families are those most frequently cited in notarial records for the period in the Archivio di Stato and in parish records in the Archivio Archivescovile in Bologna.

³¹For dowries for poor girls and charitable trusts, see Gabriele Paleotti, *Episcopale Bononiensis*, (Bologna, 1580), p.88, and p.255.

families made an input to this trousseau³².

The items in the *corredo* appear in notarial acts, since it was critical that the bride's worth should be legally established, and they sometimes feature in parish records for the marriage, outlining the terms and contents of the bride's dowry. The items also appear in the account books and family diaries (*Libri di Ricordi*) of the men obliged to purchase the *corredo*, usually under the heading *spesa di vestire* ("the expense of clothing"). A surviving series of account books from the late sixteenth century, kept by male members of the Gozzadini family indicate that all the Gozzadini men regarded as *capofamiglia* bought extensive amounts of clothes and jewels for their daughters, female wards, and future wives, which would also serve to adorn these women at their weddings³³. Minutely itemised details of these articles in the *libri di ricordi* help contribute to an understanding of Bolognese marriage rituals, and permit a closer reading of "dowry" portraits painted by Lavinia Fontana.

In 1561, for example, Ulisse Gozzadini was charged with purchasing the *corredo* for Faustina Guidotti, who was to become the wife of his nephew Fabritio Gozzadini³⁴. The lengthy inventory of the goods he bought includes innumerable dresses made of damasks, satins, velvets and combinations of the three, silk overdresses, silk and velvet

³²Christiane Klapisch-Zuber discusses the implications of the *corredo* in "The Griselda Complex: Dowry and Marriage Gifts in the Quattrocento", in *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago, 1985), pp.213-246.

³³Documents are taken from Archivio Gozzadini, BCB. Lavinia Fontana's portrait of Laudomia Gozzadini and her family is the subject of the next chapter.

³⁴*Libro di Ricordi di Ulisse Gozzadini*, Archivio Gozzadini, BCB, vol I, *Libri di Ricordi dal 1389-1709*.

caps and shoes, and several fur pieces. Ulisse wrote a separate inventory of the pieces of jewelry that he bought for Faustina, a list which included gold chains, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, girdles, and pearl necklaces set with rubies. The jewels cost him the vertiginous total of three thousand, three hundred and forty two lire. The same Ulisse, when he died in 1567, left money for his daughters Laudomia and Ginevra to be provided for in a similar fashion for their marriages to their cousins Camillo and Annibale Gozzadini³⁵. Gabbion Gozzadini, cousin to the above-mentioned Gozzadini family members, records that his father Alessandro Gozzadini spent over a thousand lire purchasing silk and velvet dresses, lengths of gold embroidered cloths, numerous pairs of gloves and shoes, and three mirrors for his daughter Flaminia on her marriage to Alberto Caccianemici in 1587³⁶. In 1578, when Camilla Paleotti was marrying Alessandro's son Salustio, the groom's family purchased for Camilla, "a dress of red embroidered gros grain silk, a bright yellow silk bodice, a ring with a red stone set in gold, a length of soft cloth, and a pair of shoes", for five hundred and eighty one lire³⁷. Here one sees the family of the groom adding to the already large *corredo* and dowry provided by the bride's family.

Although the clothes and jewels were purchased to bedeck a woman throughout her life, they were only "tangentially" her property. They belonged with her dowry, and their management passed into the hands of her husband. He could, if he wished, sell

³⁵See chapter 4, "Laudomia Gozzadini and her Family Portrait" for more on Ulisse's wedding plans.

³⁶Gabbion Gozzadini, *Libro di Ricordi*, Archivio Gozzadini, vol 1, BCB.

³⁷Gabbion Gozzadini, *Libro di Conti*, Archivio Gozzadini, *Libri amministrativi*, vol 396.

them to realise hard cash after the wedding although to do so was unusual³⁸. However, the garments and their wearer would appear at their most glorious during the days of the wedding celebrations. During the marriage, childbirth and successive pregnancies could easily destroy a woman's looks and figure, and death might remove her from her husband entirely. Therefore, it was at the wedding itself that the bride's worth, her family's status, and the grandeur of the match were all encapsulated in the bride's appearance.

Gabriele Paleotti worried that too much emphasis was placed on the bride's appearance on her wedding day. He recommended that brides be dressed as modestly as possible; Paleotti felt that sartorial ostentation contradicted the sanctity of the wedding day. He also requested that the wedding party confine its nuptial "gaiety" (*hilarità nuptiale*) to the home, and not spill out onto the streets, where its finery would be too conspicuously displayed³⁹. Nonetheless, the wedding day continued to be regarded as the first public manifestation of the marriage and conspicuous consumption was an important part of the wedding's visual presentation. The families involved were determined to ensure that the wedding, whose ceremonies extended over several days, constituted an impressive statement that they felt was critical to their social standing⁴⁰. The wealthiest families commissioned poets to compose an account of the *feste della nozze*, which were then published publicly⁴¹. But the eyes of the wedding guests would be on the bride,

³⁸C. Klapisch-Zuber (*Chicago*, 1985), p.225.

³⁹Gabriele Paleotti, "Del Matrimonio" (*Bologna*, 1580), p. 85.

⁴⁰For a discussion of wedding parties in sixteenth-century Bologna, see Ludovico Frati, *La Vita Privata di Bologna*, (Bologna, 1900), pp.54-58.

⁴¹Giulio Cesare Croce, *Stanze nel nozze di Pinteo Malvezzi et Barbara Orsini*, (Bologna, 1585).

sumptuously arrayed in silks and velvets and bedecked with jewelry.

To capture this moment in a portrait, given the fragility of human life and the vagaries of human relationships, was a logical step. It is probable that some of the portraits by Fontana, of very young women dressed in splendid regalia, were commissioned by the woman's family (either her blood relations or her husband), in order to establish a record of the sacred occasion when she would wear those articles that represented both the significance of the wedding day and a very substantial sum of money. When in 1641 Antonio Bumaldo praised Lavinia for her exceptional abilities in the rendering of womens' clothes, he was doubtless well aware that these abilities carried great weight with her clientele⁴².

The portrait of a young woman by Lavinia Fontana that most conspicuously acts as both an affirmation of wedding vows and as a visual *corredo* is the "Portrait of a Young Noblewoman" now in the National Gallery for Women in the Arts, Washington (fig.22). It has been suggested that the portrait of this young woman was painted by Fontana around the middle of the 1580s, although it may well have been painted much later⁴³. Up to this point, mystery has surrounded her identity. The sumptuous ornateness of her dress has led scholars to speculate that she might be Eleonora de' Medici, the Duchess of Mantua. However, her clothes are less the quotidian finery of a duchess than marriage regalia. They replicate, in astounding detail, trousseau purchases similar to those mentioned in contemporaneous *libri di ricordi*. Although there is no evidence that the

⁴²Antonio Bumaldo, *Minervalia Bononiensis* (Bologna, 1641), p.257.

⁴³Details of the attribution of the painting may be found in Cantaro, (*Milan, 1989*) p.129. The date is based on the portrait's stylistic similarity to the "Portrait of the Gozzadini family" yet the portrait has just as great an affinity to other female portraits by Fontana from the 1590s.

young woman in the painting is a member of the Gozzadini family, the portrait of this lady bears all the hallmarks of the items described in the Gozzadini *libri di ricordi*, and this portrait can thus be best understood as a visual *corredo*⁴⁴.

The young woman's regalia, its colours and textures, is set off in her portrait by the flat black undifferentiated background. She wears a bodice of banded satin in various shades of bright yellow, not unlike the description of one bought for Camilla Paleotti in 1578. The overdress is an embossed red velvet, which suggests that this costume is in fact her wedding dress, as most wedding dresses from this period in Bologna were red⁴⁵. Its heavy gold embroidery (again of the type mentioned in the *corredi*), with an intricate flower pattern, greatly increases its value. It is notable that the young woman wears no lace, other than a modest frill at her cuffs and collar. Despite its frequent use in the dress of matrons and widows, lace rarely features in the Bolognese *corredo*. This absence may have been due to the fact that Bologna, while a major producer of silks, satins and velvets, was not a lace production centre (sixteenth-century Venice, Milan and Genoa were the principal Northern Italian lace centers), and Bolognese men providing clothes

⁴⁴Aside from the remarkable similarity of the girl's jewels to those in the Gozzadini *Libri di Ricordi* there are other indications to suggest that she might be a Gozzadini girl. She bears a physical resemblance to Laudomia Gozzadini, having reddish hair and green eyes, as she is represented in the portrait Lavinia Fontana painted of her and her family in 1584. If the portrait is a work from the early 1590s, it is possible that the young woman might be Camillo and Laudomia's daughter Berenice, born in 1593 who married Fabbio Gozzadini (Gabbion Gozzadini's son) in 1596. This theory is also supported by the fact that around this time, consistent payments were made by Camillo Gozzadini to Lavinia's husband, Gian Paolo Zappi, suggesting that Lavinia was being paid for a body of work. C.f. Archivio Gozzadini, *Libri Administrativi*, vol. 337.

⁴⁵Albano Sorbelli, *Il Corredo di una Sposa Bolognese nel secolo XVI*, (Bologna, 1928) makes this point about the colour of wedding dresses for Bolognese brides.

for a bride may have deliberately avoided purchasing lace out of a sense of civic particularism, or simply as a result of custom⁴⁶.

The jewels that the young woman in this portrait wears also correspond to those described in Gozzadini *corredi*. She bears a gold chain around her neck, attached to a brooch made of pearls, rubies and sapphires. These three gems, which are the most frequently mentioned in the Gozzadini *corredi*, not only feature in the girl's necklace, but also in the cross suspended from it, in her earrings, in the seemingly endless chain that reaches down from her waist, and in her headdress, which is cunningly designed to look like a wreath of flowers. Attached to her girdle is the bejeweled pellet of a martin (*martore*), an item Ulisse Gozzadini lists in the goods that he purchased for his nephew's bride. Bejeweled stoats or ermines were a practical fashion accessory of the day, being used as a muff, and were also a work of art with their gilded paws and snouts⁴⁷. One can see that Lavinia Fontana spent considerable time on the rendering of the woman's jewels, to the extent that every detail of their working is clearly discernible. The gems glow, the pearls are lustrous, every link in the gold chains is sharply defined. On some occasions Fontana actually took her sitter's jewelry home with her and would paint it in her studio, thereby ensuring its accurate depiction. Under such circumstances, a contract would be

⁴⁶Emily Jackson, *A History of Hand-made Lace. Dealing with the origin of lace, the growth of the great lace centres, the mode of manufacture*, (London, 1890).

⁴⁷See for example those depicted in "Portrait of a Noblewoman" by Prospero Fontana (Bologna, Museo Davia-Bargellini), "Portrait of Bianca Cappelli" by Sofonisba Anguissola (private collection) and "Antea" by Parmigianino (Naples, Museo del Capodimonte). There is also Leonardo's "Lady with an Ermine" (Cecilia Gallerani) (Cracow, Czartoryski Museum). In Leonardo's bestiary, the ermine is the essence of purity and moderation, a creature that would rather die than soil itself, qualities appropriate for a young woman in this period. See Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci, the Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*, (Cambridge, MA, 1981) p.201.

signed with the jewelry's owner, ensuring its safe return⁴⁸.

The Washington portrait might have been commissioned by the young lady's family, or could have been a betrothal gift from the husband, made as a visual record of the union, what it brought to him, and what he had already given her. However, the young woman is not presented as either an expressionless doll or a clothes horse. Her face is fresh, devoid of artifice and make-up, and makes a profound contrast to the elaborate riches of her dress⁴⁹. Her glance, directed away from the viewer, is suggestive of modesty, in contrast to the gazes of matrons painted by Lavinia Fontana which meet the viewer. It is a serious face, not without a certain resolve, underlined by the self-possession of her bearing.

The lap dog, of the expensive "*cane bolognese*" breed, was one of the ultimate fashion accessories of the period⁵⁰. Within the context of the portrait, it would have been widely recognised as a symbol of marital fidelity in Bologna, where Andrea Alciati's

⁴⁸See for example, the contract between Lavinia's husband Gian Paolo Zappi, and Caterina Borsani, which concerns the borrowing of a pearl necklace for a period of time. (*Documenti per Lavinia Fontana*, BCI).

⁴⁹Leon Battista Alberti strongly disapproved of respectable women wearing make-up, believing it to be the sign of a licentious woman, see *I Primi Tre Libri Della Famiglia*, ed. Pellegrini and Spangano, (Florence, 1946), p.255-258.

⁵⁰Riccardo Carapelli "Cane Bolognese, principi medicei e alcuni disegni inediti seicenteschi" *Carrobbio* 12, 1986, pp.101-110, reports that in the middle of the seventeenth-century the dogs were sought after by Cosimo de' Medici in order to be given as presents to female dignitaries from Flanders.

emblem book was popular⁵¹. Alciati's emblem for *matrimonio* depicts a couple seated together, she extending her hand to him with a little dog curled up at her feet⁵². In the commentary below the emblem, Alciati explains that the dog is there as a symbol of true faith. In the Washington portrait, Fontana uses the dog to help create a narrative within the picture. It does not simply lie by the young woman's side, but fawns upon her as she extends her hand to stroke it. The little dog's impetuous leap emphasizes her own upright decorous stance, while her caress suggests that her nature is affectionate.

A portrait of a young woman from the early seventeenth-century identified by an inscription as Giulia Ruini Musotti helps to confirm that the portrait by Fontana was painted within the context of marriage⁵³. The picture of Giulia shows a young blond woman wearing a red dress, a lace ruff and a long necklace of pearls and gold. She has a little dog by her side. Giulia was married in 1620 to Filippo Musotti, but she cannot have been married very long, as the inscription on the painting indicates that she died at

⁵¹The legal scholar Andrea Alciati (1492-1550) was a professor at the University of Bologna between 1537 and 1546. His book of emblems was printed in Italian as *Diverse Imprese accomodate e diverse moralità, con versi che i loro significati dichiarono* (Lyon, 1546).

⁵²Andrea Alciati (Lyon, 1546), p. 130. The emblem depicts a couple seated together in the open air, she extends her hand to him, a sleeping dog at their feet, with a fruit tree and a town in the background. The verse below the emblem reads: "*Ecco la donna al suo marito porge/ la mano e guico un cagnoletto a piedi/il che da vera fede essemi o scorge/l'arboro, che di mezzo a questi vedi/e'l frutto, che sincero amor produce...*"

⁵³This picture was exhibited at the exhibition, *Il Ritratto Italiano* at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence and is described in its catalogue, *Il Ritratto Italiano dal Caravaggio al Tiepolo* (Bergamo, 1927), p.59.

the age of fifteen⁵⁴. This portrait must have been painted within the context of her getting married and it seems more than coincidental that the iconography of her portrait (red dress and little dog) corresponds with that of the young woman in Washington.

There is another portrait of a young woman one can now give to Fontana, on the grounds of its stylistic similarities to the Washington portrait and to other female portraits by Fontana (whereabouts unknown, fig.23). The young woman represented seems close in age to the Washington one⁵⁵. While she wears a white overdress embossed with dark velvet and a white underdress, they both wear exactly the same type of striped yellow bodice, with frilled sleeves. Considerable attention has been paid on the part of the artist to both sets of costume. They are both turned slightly to their right and their long and slender hands are displayed in like fashion, although in this picture the young woman holds a handkerchief in one hand and rests her other on a book on the table next to her. Unlike that of the other woman, the gaze of this young woman meets that of the viewer (quite probably she is already married), but the careful and delicate modelling of their faces is similar. They share an air of gravity and graciousness. That there are a number of comparable details to both portraits not only suggests that this last portrait is indeed by Fontana, but that she developed a formula for the depiction of these young women that became particularly popular with the nobility.

⁵⁴Translated from Latin, this inscription reads "Distinguished above her sex in polite letters and outstanding manners (she) died in her fifteenth year".

⁵⁵This portrait was sold at Sothebys, New York on January 12, 1995, as part of the property of the New York Historical Society. See the catalogue of sale, pp.53-54. It was there described as "Florentine School, circa 1575". However, stylistically, it is much closer to a Lavinia Fontana portrait than to a work by Alessandro Allori or Santi di Tito. Furthermore the young woman's dress, described as being Florentine costume under Spanish influence bears a much closer resemblance to late sixteenth-century Bolognese costume. Henry Dietrich-Fernández brought this painting to my attention.

What would become of these young women, once their bridal clothes were put back in the *cassone* and they settled down to married life? There could be tribulations ahead, the pressures of producing healthy children, numerous pregnancies or problems ensuing from the mismanagement by male relatives of one's financial interests⁵⁶. But for the very privileged, honour and status came with being a *matrona nobile*. Life for the Bolognese noblewoman was not without amusements. There were balls and feasts to attend, commemorative occasions and chronicles indicate which noblewomen were present. They enjoyed theatrical spectacles and on at least one occasion a play was put on solely for the noblewoman Isotta Bolognini Amorini and her female friends and relatives. The surviving manuscript for the play, *Lo Specchio della honesta e virtuosa gentildonna*, a tragi-comedy written by Giovan Battista Bombello addresses in its prologue its audience of *nobilissime spettatrici*, perhaps one of the earliest acknowledgements of a specifically female viewer⁵⁷.

If there was a female viewer among the Bolognese nobility, then women themselves were the object of others' attention. Bologna in the late-sixteenth century was a courtless society, without a ruling family, without a single female figure of authority, a *duchessa* or a *marchesa*, on whom the attention of noble courtiers was focused and from whom favours came. In Bologna, therefore, it was from their own society and its offshoots that the female nobility came under the kind of scrutiny which was reserved in Florence for a Medici Duchess, in Mantua for a Gonzaga Princess, or in

⁵⁶See Chapters 4 and 6 for a discussion of these issues.

⁵⁷*Lo Specchio della honesta e virtuosa gentildonna; tragicomedia di Gio: Battista Bombello, fatta rappresentare dalla Signora Isotta Bolognini Amorini il sabbato del Carnevale, MDLXXVII, BCB, B.317.* The play is a variation of the Griselda story.

Ferrara for a lady of the d'Este family.

The most conspicuous way this kind of attention manifested itself in Bologna was in the production of *Laude*, poems or prose written in praise of the beauties, charms and graces of individual Bolognese noblewomen. If there was a precedent for this genre in Bologna then it was Sabadino Arienti's *Gynevra delle clare donne* of 1483, which he dedicated to Gynevra Sforza Bentivoglio⁵⁸. The difference between Arienti's work and those described below is that he was working in the tradition of Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris*. Arienti chose to write poems about thirty two women of particular worthiness, most of them dead, not all of them local, remarkable for piety, scholarship and in some cases as power-brokers and warriors.

By 1519, Angelo Claudio Tolomei had taken Arienti's format and applied it to living women from the Bolognese nobility⁵⁹. It was from Tolomei that writers of the late sixteenth-century would take their cue. These men could be professional writers, such as Mutio Manfredi, or scholarly members of the nobility, such as Ercole Marescotti, or Alessandro Griffoni. These three at least, saw themselves as champions of womanhood. Besides writing poetry to Bolognese noblewomen, all of them wrote discourses on the "excellence of womanhood". Some of them published anonymously, as did the writer who called his book *Ritratti delle Bellezze et Valore di alcune delle più Nobile et più*

⁵⁸Sabadino^{deli}/Arienti, *Gynevra delle clare donne* (published Bologna, 1888), ed. Corrado Ricci. For a discussion of the context of the work see Pamela Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman - The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park, 1992), pp.33-64.

⁵⁹Angelo Claudio Tolomei, *Lode delle Donne Bolognesi* (Bologna, 1519)

*Leggiadre Donne di Bologna*⁶⁰. His choice of the word "portraits" in the title seems significant, given that there seems to be a direct correlation between the works of *Laude* writers from the last three decades of the sixteenth-century and some of Lavinia Fontana's portraits of Bolognese noblewomen. Both writer and artist were presenting an "image" of the female nobility, a representation in whose making the gentildonne themselves would be willing participants.

The selection process of noblewomen whom a *laude* writer might choose to eulogise was doubtless in part conditioned by family alliance and personal preference. Thirty eight noblewomen appear in the *Amorose Fiamme* (the Amorous Flames) of Ercole Fontana⁶¹. However, only eleven of these feature among the sixty five whom Alessandro Griffoni praises a few years later in his *Breve ragionamento sopra le Bellezze d'Alcune Honorassime Gentildonne Bolognesi*⁶². Ercole Fontana makes no mention of any woman connected to the Hercolani family, while Griffoni has poems about four of these ladies⁶³.

⁶⁰ Anon. *Ritratti delle Bellezze et Valore di alcune delle più Nobile et più Leggiadre Donne di Bologna* (Bologna, 1567). Although the writer is anonymous in the text, he was clearly a member of the nobility, as he dedicates his work to Lucretia Gromella Castiglione, whom he describes as his aunt and greatest patron.

⁶¹ Ercole Fontana, *Amorose Fiamme di M. Hercole Fontana, in lode delle illustri Gentildonne Bolognesi* (Bologna, 1574). Ercole Fontana is possibly the notary of the same name, who ran a flourishing practise in Bologna in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries and who numbered a great many members of the nobility among his clients.

⁶² Alessandro Griffoni, *Discorso della Nobilità delle Donne, con un breve ragionamento sopra le Bellezze d'Alcune Honorassime Gentildonne Bolognesi*, misc. AAB. Griffoni was a member of a noble family.

⁶³ These are Emilia Ghisilieri Hercolani, Dianira Hercolani Piatessi, Ludovica Pepoli Hercolani and Virginia Rossi Hercolani.

The families of some women were clearly too powerful to ignore, such as that of Gregory XIII's sister-in law, Cecilia Bargellini Boncompagni. She and her female descendants feature regularly in *laude*. Then there was one noblewoman whose beauty and appeal in the 1570s and 80s seemingly made her impossible for any poet dedicated to the writing of *laude* to ignore; she was Costanza Alidosi Isolani.

Costanza Alidosi Isolani was from a wealthy Imolese family who maintained close ties to Bologna⁶⁴. One of her best known relatives was Cardinal Francesco Alidosi, who was associated with Pope Julius II and Michelangelo, when both were in Bologna⁶⁵. She was probably born in 1557, around the same time as several of Lavinia Fontana's female patrons, which gives credence to the idea that it was a younger, sophisticated generation of women who initially found the woman artist appealing⁶⁶. Around 1573, Costanza was married to Ridolfo Isolani, one of the most prominent Bolognese noblemen, who was destined to have an illustrious career, both in local Bolognese politics and as Ambassador to the Medici in Florence.

Costanza must have begun to attract attention and admiration at the festivities and social gatherings attended by the Bolognese nobility and their retinues while in her teens. By 1574, the young Imolese caused Ercole Fontana, in an elaborate and complex poem

⁶⁴See Francesco Sansovino, *Della Origine et de' fatti delle famiglie illustri d'Italia* (Venice, 1582), pp.252-259 and P. Ginani, *Memorie Storiche della antica et illustre Famiglia Alidosia* (Rome, 1735). Costanza came from a family of eight sisters.

⁶⁵James Beck, "Cardinal Alidosi, Michelangelo and the Sistine Ceiling" *Artibus et Historiae*, 22, 1990, pp.63-78.

⁶⁶Laudomia Gozzadini, the subject of the following chapter, was born in 1556, Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani, seemingly one of Fontana's widow patrons (see chapter 5, "La Vita Vedovile") was born around that time also.

to liken her to a goddess who has "deigned to live among us" (i.e the Bolognese)⁶⁷. Writing around the same time as Ercole Fontana, Alessandro Griffoni listed what were Costanza's most appealing features. Declaring that "the marvels of her beauty could turn men into hard marble" (a comment perhaps deliberately intended as an erotic pun), Griffoni praised her "tiny ears, her most beautiful mouth, lips like rubies that close over two rows of the whitest pearls, her noble dignity, her sweet laughter, her tender words and glances, the majesty of her beauty, vivacity and grace" which, he concluded "stupefy all those that lay eyes on her"⁶⁸. Costanza similarly impressed Mutio Manfredi, who spread his net a little further, to include women from across Emilia Romagna in his *Cento Donne Cantate di Mutio Manfredi*⁶⁹. By the late 1580s, Costanza was considered by two writers as the "glory of the world". Ercole Marescotti in 1589 felt that "the seat of greatness rested in her wide brow"⁷⁰. Like Griffoni, he likened her teeth to the sweetest pearls, which rested in a mouth that was carved from precious coral and that her whole body was

⁶⁷Ercole Fontana (*Bologna, 1574*). His poem to Costanza begins: "*Tu pur mi Sforzi Amor come ti piace/Mentro io contemplo il piu leggiadro volto*" and ends "*Ogni virtute, e l'amoroso arciero/ha degno avria d'habitar qui fra noi.*"

⁶⁸Griffoni, (1577, *AAB, Miscellanea*). Griffoni^{who} dedicates several pages of his manuscript to Costanza, opens by indicating that she has "*tante bellezze...sua bellezza transforma gl'huomini in duri Marmi...picciole orrechie, la bellissima boca et quella labbra che rubini sembrano dentro alle quali si chiude due filze di uguali, schietti et bianchissime perle...la gola bianchissima, la maesta dell'esser gentile et o dolci risi et i modi soavi, le soavi parole e i dolci sguardi et la Maesta della belezza, della vivacita et gratia, non facciano stupir gli occhi, che la risguardano, con i sensi tutti che la contemplano.*"

⁶⁹Mutio Manfredi, *Cento Donne Cantate di Mutio Manfredi* (Parma, 1580). He describes Costanza as "giving delight to his tired mind" ("*diletto dato a la mia stanza mente*").

⁷⁰Ercole Marescotti, *Dell' Eccellenza della Donna* (Fermo, 1589), in his praise of Costanza declares, "*La quale certamente si puo chiamar gloriosa del mondo...*"

like a tall and well proportioned column. An anonymous writer, the composer of the *Poesie in lode di varie Donne Bolognesi*, writing around the same time as Marescotti, declared that every glory of love rested in the splendour of Costanza's beauty⁷¹. This writer also produced a kind of cast list of the ladies of Bologna, giving each a kind of theatrical identity. Costanza headed the list, appearing as the *gloria del mondo*.

Yet Costanza Alidosi Isolani was apparently not just an admired beauty, she was a woman of sharp sense and business acumen. In the mid 1580s, Ridolfo Isolani was appointed Bolognese Ambassador to Florence. While Costanza would eventually join him in Florence, there was a period of time when she was alone in Bologna, with power of attorney over Ridolfo's affairs. This position necessitated Costanza spending considerable amounts of time in the notary's company as she did in July of 1596, when she arranged to rent a farm and land to Francesco de Armis⁷². In the document outlining the terms of the contract, Costanza is described as "acting in this matter on behalf of and in the name of the illustrious Count her husband and with the strength of his authority"⁷³. Ridolfo trusted his wife's business sense sufficiently to endow her with the "strength of his authority", rather than leave his affairs to agents and accountants while he was away in

⁷¹*Poesie in lode di varie Dame Bolognesi* BUB, Ms.1207. This manuscript is inscribed "Ex Bibliotheca Pepulea" ("from the Pepoli library"). On Costanza, the poet declares, "Ogni gloria d'Amore/Resta e nello (suo) Splendore.."

⁷²"Locatione fatta dalla Signora Costanza Alidosi Isolani a nome del Co: Ridolfo Isolani suo marito di una casa a sotto Parocchia di S. M. Barbara per anni sei", Archivio Bianchini Pasetti, Fondo Montanari Bianchini, Istrumenti 231, #1719. See below for Hercole and Francesco de Armis relationship with the Gonzaga family.

⁷³The document opens with these lines "*Illustris Domina Constantia olim illustris Alexandri de Alidosiis uxor illustris Rodulphis Isolani Nobilis et Senatoris, Bononiensis capelle sancti Michaelia de Leprosettis; Agens in hoc parte et nomine dicti illustris eius Mariti vigore eius mandati procure...*"

Florence.

It should not then, come as a surprise that such a woman as Costanza Alidosi Isolani, a woman endowed with wealth, beauty and some independence and power should be one of Lavinia Fontana's patrons. There are two portraits of her which are alike in almost all details bar the views in the background and scholars have agreed that both are by Lavinia Fontana (private collections, figs.24 a and b). Malvasia first identified as by Lavinia, "a (portrait) in the Isolani house of a lady seated with a dog on her lap which is a divine work"⁷⁴. Oretti later expanded on this citation in his list of Lavinia's works with a description in the Casa Isolani of "a most wonderful portrait of Costanza Alidosi, wife of Ridolfo Isolani, who died on April 2nd, 1597, at the age of forty and was buried in S. Giacomo Maggiore, she is represented full length from life, seated with a dog on her lap, and on a table is a glass vase with flowers and two golden bracelets, and underneath one can read: Costantia de Alidosiis"⁷⁵. The "Casa Isolani" in question would be the fifteenth-century Palazzo Isolani on the Strada Maggiore in Bologna, renowned for the addition of a staircase by Vignola. It is this portrait that is now in a private collection in New York. As both writers saw the portrait in the same location, one must assume that they saw the same picture and that the "Costantia de Alidosys" inscription, painted below her chair was added after Malvasia saw the painting and before Oretti viewed it.

⁷⁴"Un (ritratto) in casa Isolani d'una signora con un cagnolino in grembo che è opera divina (Bologna 1686/1969), p.177.

⁷⁵Oretti (1670-1780), c.11. "Casa Isolani: il superbissimo ritratto di Costanza Alidosi moglie di Rodolfo Isolani; la quale morì li 2 Aprile dell'anno 1597 in età di 40 anni e fu seppellita in S. Giacomo Maggiore, e rappresentata in figura intiera quanto il naturale, sedente con un cane in grembo, e su un tavolino un vaso di vetro con fiori e due manilli d'oro, e sotto si legge: Costantia de Alidosiis"

The Isolani family also had a castle in Minerbio, half way between Bologna and Ferrara and the second portrait of Costanza is still there. It seems that it was decided that there should be a "country" and a "city" Costanza portrait, a decision that can be perceived from the views in the background of the two portraits⁷⁶. The background of the painting now in New York is ^(Fig 24b) architecturally rendered in the same way as Lavinia Fontana's portrait of Francesco Panigarola, a corridor with thick columns giving onto a courtyard, suggestive of the Palazzo Isolani. The background of the other portrait shows a pastoral landscape through a window, a lake, trees and hills on which stands a castle, surely a reference to the castle at Minerbio. Costanza, even after accompanying her husband to Florence, would maintain a presence in both Isolani establishments.

The dating of these pictures has proved difficult. Fortunati-Pietrantonio and Cantaro hold the portraits to have been painted in the early 1590s, just a few years before Costanza's death. It seems more probable that the paintings date from the late 1580s, possibly about 1588, in the period in which Costanza remained alone in Bologna, in control of Isolani family finances and that she chose this time in her life to have her portrait painted⁷⁷. In the next two chapters, it will be demonstrated that Bolognese women did use portraiture as a form of self-expression or as a means of declaring thier new-found autonomy. Costanza could have wanted to mark this time in her life by having her portrait painted.

In these portraits of Costanza, there are indications of what the *laude* writers found

⁷⁶This hypothesis is also proffered by Daniella Ferriani in Fortunati-Pietrantonio ed, (Milan, 1994), p.194.

⁷⁷Fortunati Pietrantonio (Bologna, 1986), II, pp. 732-733, Cantaro (Milan, 1989), pp.172-173.

so appealing in her, but for the sitter, the notion of *bellezza* is not the primary issue in her portrait. Certainly she has the wide brow admired by Marescotti, the sparkling eyes, little mouth that is indeed the colour of coral, which attracted Griffoni, a long neck encircled by white pearls. Her head and neck are framed by white ruffles. Pink flowers nestle at the top of her bodice, allowing no hint of immodesty, but perhaps inviting comparison between what lies beneath the bodice and the little flowers on top. The flowers in the glass vase may also have been included to provide a poetic comparison to the lady. However, the two portraits of Costanza also provide a picture of control and wealth. Hers is a very direct and very sure gaze that meets the viewer, quite a contrast to the modestly indirect gaze of the young woman in the portrait in Washington. She is dressed in astoundingly expensive clothes. She has an underdress of brown silk brocade, an overdress heavily embroidered with gold thread. Her sleeves are gold brocade encrusted with small pearls, probably worth as much as underdress and overdress combined. These clothes are not wedding clothes, they are the garb of a wealthy matron.

There are possible references to a missing Ridolfo in the pictures. Costanza has her dog, her little *fides* symbol in her arms. Rather curiously, there are two gold bracelets lying on the table, to which the viewer's attention is drawn by her decision to display the jewelry, but not to wear it. They are gifts, perhaps, from an absent husband whom Costanza dutifully acknowledges, even as she marks her own time of power in Bologna.

Costanza was unusual in that the Bolognese *laude* writers still sang praises to her charms over a decade after she had been launched as a young bride in Bolognese society. Griffoni, Marescotti and others clearly felt they had identified a rare quality in her. Nonetheless, there was still a premium placed on youth and by the late 1580s another young *Gentildonna Bolognese* had been invited to share Costanza's pedestal. She was

Isabella Ruini Angelleli.

Isabella is interesting in that her lineage is readily traceable through a female line. She was the daughter of Vittoria Pepoli Ruini, who was the daughter of Angiola Boncompagni Pepoli, who was the daughter of Cecilia Bargellini Boncompagni, Gregory XIII's sister-in-law. Isabella's grandmother, Angiola was aware of this sense of female descendancy. In 1574, she commissioned no less than thirty six poets to write a verse or two each to celebrate the birth of her child Giulia and the introduction to the verses speaks of Angiola in terms of female relatives⁷⁸. Angiola's daughter, Vittoria, was the subject of several *Laude*, so it is not surprising that the eyes of Bologna would have been focused on Vittoria's daughter Isabella when she made her entrance into society with her marriage to Giovanni Angelleli, which took place in 1586⁷⁹. Isabella had the substantial dowry of 8000 scudi⁸⁰.

Isabella caused the same kind of reaction among Bolognese *laude* writers as Costanza Isolani had done over a decade before. The anonymous writer of the *Poesie in lode di varie Dame Bolognesi*, of the late 1580s nominates her as the "Sun" and his poem to her declares that she, like a resplendent sun can chase all the clouds away from the earth⁸¹. Isabella's mother, who not a decade before had been a *laude* beauty in her own right is now described by this same writer in terms of being the wondrous mother

⁷⁸*Felice Parto della Illustrissima Signora Donn' Angiola Boncompagni de Peppoli* (Bologna, 1574).

⁷⁹Mario Fanti and Rosa Chiossi, *Ricerche su Carlo Ruini (1530-1598)* (Bologna, 1984), p.35. Isabella's father Carlo was a senator with scholarly leanings.

⁸⁰Dolfi (*Bologna*, 1770), p.50 gives Isabella's dowry as 8000 scudi.

⁸¹Ms. 1207, BUB. "*Se come il sol risplende/Il sol tragge i vapori/dal sera della terra..*"

of the beautiful sun. Marescotti asserts that all are stupefied by the beauty of Isabella's face and that all were enamoured of her, not believing nature could make such a beauty so perfect. All of Bologna competes to see her and Marescotti says that he has found himself innumerable times in such "competitions"⁸².

Further indications of how Isabella's beauty was esteemed by the city of Bologna are recorded by Ghiselli, who describes the reception of Gian Francesco Aldobrandini, Pope Clement VIII's "nephew" and Governor of the Catholic Church when he came to Bologna on July 2nd, 1595. Aldobrandini was given a variety of exotic gifts, including a horse made of black velvet and finished in gold and a black velvet cassock embroidered in gold. In the evening, Ercole Bentivoglio gave a banquet and a dance for him, at which about thirty noblewomen were present. "Questo Signor", Ghiselli writes, danced with Isabella Ruini, suggesting that a dance with Isabella was as great a gift as all the luxurious objects with which Aldobrandini had been presented⁸³.

There are a variety of images which can be identified as portraying Isabella Ruini. These include two lead medallions which had originally been coloured, which show a woman in profile with curly, reddish hair and a little plump chin. She is wearing a dress with buttons down its front and a ruff⁸⁴. A design in a collection in the

⁸²Marescotti (*Fermo, 1589*), "*La consonanza di quel viso et di quelle membra si grande et st si stupenda che tutto BOLOGNA (his capitals) a gara si more per vederla, ed io molto volte mi sono ritrovato con tanti innumerabili concorsi...*"

⁸³Ghiselli, *Memorie Antiche di Bologna* Ms 770, BUB.

⁸⁴ See Emilio Ravaoli, "Il 'primato' di Isabella. Una placchetta per una gentildonna Ruini", *Arte a Bologna. Bolletini dei musei civici d'arte antica*, 3, 1994, pp.144-148.

Archiginassio identifies this image as that of "Isabella Ruina" (sic)⁸⁵. That there was more than one of such images cast suggests that they might have been intended for Isabella's friends and admirers. In the Pitti Palace, there is a portrait by Lavinia Fontana, signed and dated 1593 of a lady with the same reddish hair and plump chin, as the lady in the medallion, wearing a dress with similar buttons and ruff (fig.25). In the same gallery there is a copy of this portrait by Cristofano dell'Altissimo on which there is the inscription "Bolognese Noblewoman from the Ruini house". Altissimo's painting originally came from the Medici Villa of Artimino, where there was a collection of copies of paintings of well known Italian beauties⁸⁶. Given Isabella Ruini's special status as a Bolognese beauty, it seems impossible that Lavinia's lady from the Ruini family and Isabella Ruini are not one and the same. In Lavinia's portrait of Isabella, the compositional layout is quite similar to that of the young woman from Washington. She is depicted in half-length against a black undifferentiated background, fondling a "*cane Bolognese*". Needless to say, she is sumptuously dressed and lavishly bejewelled. She is dressed in lustrous dark green silk, a colour surely chosen as it matches the colour of her eyes. Lavinia clearly developed a new technique during this period for representing the sheen on silk, with the application of a carefully judged amount of white paint, as is evident from other of her paintings of this period. Isabella's clothing illustrates the new fondness for lace that fashionable Bolognese ladies began to demonstrate in the 1590s; there is exceptionally detailed work at her collar and cuffs. As Ravaioli points out,

⁸⁵E. Ravaioli (*Bologna, 1994*), p.146.

⁸⁶Ravaioli, p.14, note 87 cites M.L. Chappell, "Le Bellezze di Artimino; Una nota sull'attribuzione", *Prospettiva*, 25, 1981, pp.59-64 on the history of the copy of this painting, which came to Artimino in 1599.

Archangelo Passerotti designed a motif in lace for her in 1591 and Lavinia herself became adept as an illustrator of lace work during this period as well⁸⁷. The chain around Isabella's neck is particularly remarkable. It consists of about twenty settings of the type of pendant seen hanging from the chain of the girl in the Washington portrait. It looks like the most expensive piece of jewelry worn by any of Lavinia's noblewoman sitters.

Isabella's little dog, with its fashionable bejewelled ears, draws attention to her long elegant hands and fingers⁸⁸. One of its paws rests in the palm of her cupped hand. She supports it with the other, running her fingers through his fur, a gesture which invokes a sort of sensual tactility. A *laude* writer of the time might be tempted to make a comparison between Isabella's apparent legions of admirers and the adoring expression in her little dog's eyes as it looks yearningly up at her. Isabella strokes her pet, but her gaze meets that of the viewer, with a secret and knowing small smile.

Such a portrait of Isabella Ruini was undoubtedly intended for viewing by visitors to her house. It depicts an image of a young noblewoman bedecked in such a way as befits her station and status. A devotee of Isabella would feel inclined to compare the lustre of her pink and white skin to that of her silk dress, the redness of her lips to the rubies in the chain around the neck, the devotion of her little dog to her to the devotion of her admirers. He would look upon the contours of her dress where it covered the swell

⁸⁷Ravaioli, p.144, Aurelio Passerotti, *Libro di Lavorieri* (Bologna, 1591). Aurelio was apparently a friend of Lavinia Fontana (see Chapter 2, "Painting for the Illustrious Man") and his book was published by Lavinia's mother's family, the de Bonardis.

⁸⁸Eleanor Tufts, "Lavinia Fontana, Bolognese Humanist" in *Le arti a Bologna e in Emilia dal XVI al XVII secolo*, A. Emiliani ed, (C.I.H.A., Bologna, 1982), pp.129-132 drew attention to the rings in the ears of lapdogs in Fontana's paintings of women (see the Gozzadini family portrait and that of Costanza Sforza as well), which appears to be a Bolognese fashion without parallel elsewhere in Italy at the time.

of her breast, delight in the way her pearl earrings draw attention to the shape of her ears, her finely modelled nose and the soft waves of her hair. In this sense, Lavinia's portrait of Isabella Ruini functions as the visual embodiment of a *laude* dedicated to this Bolognese noblewoman. Yet, like the *laude*, it is a decorous picture, a portrait of a young society *matrone*. It certainly gives no clue that only a year before, Lavinia Fontana had painted quite a different picture of Isabella Ruini Angelleli.

Gabriele Paleotti, while strongly disapproving of paintings of Venuses and other profane subjects in which a degree of nudity featured, recognised that he was incapable of banning them outright and simply requested in his discourse on images that nude paintings be kept out of the sight of children⁸⁹. Paintings of naked women, (probably those identified as depictions of Venus) do feature in Bolognese property inventories, though often they were kept in a family's country, rather than their city dwelling, or else hung in rooms in which there was a holy painting over the door⁹⁰. In fact there are two paintings of nude women in existence from Lavinia's career in Bologna. One, of Venus and Cupid, (Venice, private collection) is signed by Lavinia and dated 1585 (fig.26). The picture has a chaste and moralising quality more usually seen in Northern versions of this subject⁹¹. In Lavinia's painting Venus and Cupid, depicted full length, "negate" each

⁸⁹Paleotti suggested that those who had need of profane images for "study" would be advised to keep them in "*luoghi remoti*" (1582/*Bari*, 1960), vol II, p.293.

⁹⁰See for example, the "Inventario legale fatto dalla Molt. Illustr. Signora Camilla Calzolari, degli Beni del Gio Battista de' Prencipi dal Medico", 23 Ottobre, 1609, Fondo Fabbia/ Fibri, Documenti Bonfiglioli, #2, n. 269 ASB, in which there are no profane paintings kept in the palazzo in the town, but several in the villa. See appendix for full transcription of this inventory.

⁹¹For example, Jan Gossaert's "Venus and Cupid of 1521", painted for Philip of Burgundy (Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schoone Kunsten van België) depicts a naked Venus chastising Cupid and an inscription on the frame criticising him. See

others' erotic powers. Cupid clasps a pink train over Venus' pudenda, while Venus has taken Cupid's bow away from him. It is however, still a sensual image, Venus caresses Cupid: the pink cloth and a gold veil contrast with the whiteness of her skin: the jewels that adorn her body invite comment on the comparison between their hard lustre and the softness of her flesh. Who the patron of this painting was is unknown, although it must have been someone sufficiently intimate with Lavinia and her family to request such a work from her.

As Cantaro points out, the "Venus and Cupid" in Rouen, depicting a half-length, mostly naked Venus with Cupid, signed and dated by Lavinia in 1592 (fig.27), is stylistically and compositionally close to the naked "Ladies at their toilet", the genre of portraits of French courtesans produced by the Fontainebleau school⁹². Bearing in mind the relationship between Fontainebleau and Bolognese painters, such an influence on Lavinia is not unusual. She may have either seen copies, or prints of such paintings. What is remarkable, however, is the striking similarity between the face of Venus and the face of Isabella Ruini in Lavinia's portrait from a year later. Cantaro briefly acknowledges similarities between the two heads, without detailing them very closely. Their hair colour and style, soft waves with tendrils brushed down on to the face is near identical. The shape of the face, turned slightly to her left, with the slightly amorphous chin are very alike in both paintings, as are the shape and colour of their mouths. Their

Ellen Muller and Jeanne Marie Noel, "Humanist views on art and morality" in *Saints and She-Devils, Images of Women in the 15th and 16th Centuries* (London, 1987), pp. 152-153.

⁹²Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), pp. 160-161. As Cantaro also notes, there is also a late sixteenth/early seventeenth-century copy of Lavinia's "Venus and Cupid" which was in a collection in Munich.

ears and earrings and pearl decorations bear close similarities also. Anyone familiar with Isabella Ruini would instantly recognise the noblewoman in this Venus. Given that she was a noblewoman and not a courtesan, such a recognition would have proved quite scandalous and one can only conclude that this picture was for the eyes of the very few, if not for an audience of one or two.

There is no reference to the painting in any of the historical sources relating to Lavinia Fontana, so one may only speculate as to who its patron might be. It does seem difficult to imagine that it was anyone but Isabella or her husband Giovanni Angelini. One of Isabella's admirers could not really have asked Lavinia, herself a respectable matron, to observe Isabella independently to provide him with an erotic portrait of the focus of his admiration, as Lavinia would be risking her entire career among the Bolognese female nobility if it was ever revealed that she had agreed to such an undertaking. Instead Isabella, surrounded by scholars and nobles praising her beauty, might have found the idea of having herself portrayed as Venus appealing. Alternatively, her husband may have wanted to see her represented as the embodiment of the goddess of love.

It is highly improbable that Lavinia actually depicted Isabella's body from life, but instead provided her with an appropriately eroticised form, artfully draped in transparent veil with a gold thread. It would be interesting to know what Lavinia herself thought of the commission. It certainly did not scandalise her or she would have refused it and all three of her remaining nudes suggest that she took pleasure in depicting the female form.

There was possibly a realisation on the part of Isabella or Giovanni that beauty was only fleeting and that it might be wise to record Isabella's charms while they were

at the height of their powers. However for Isabella Ruini, her tenure as reigning beauty and focus of admiration in Bologna was much shorter than that of Costanza Isolani. In 1595, a young woman from the Piacenza nobility, Margherita Anguiscola came to Bologna to be married to Federico Fantuzzi. Francesco Galliani wrote about her wedding and its lengthy celebrations in his diary and described her as a "Signora bellissima"⁹³. Galliani's opinion of her beauty was evidently shared by some of the noble members of the Accademia dei Gelati. In 1596 members of the Accademia, including its founder, Melchiorre Zoppi and Ridolfo Campeggi convened to decide who was the more beautiful, Isabella or Margherita, by reciting verses in favour of one or the other⁹⁴. Isabella had her particular champion, Vincenzo Fabretti who declared her beauty invincible. However, the matron did in fact lose against the newly wed. The ultimate consensus by the academicians was that Isabella was beautiful, but cold and haughty, while Margherita was beautiful, amorous and warm. Isabella seems to have lost on the grounds that she was not as "accommodating" as her rival who must have been nearly ten years younger than herself. Whether Lavinia Fontana painted Margherita Angusicola Fantuzzi's portrait is not known.

Lavinia's portrait of Costanza Isolani and Isabella Ruini and the poems written in their honour also provide another dimension to the debate about idealised portraits and poetry of beautiful women. Elizabeth Cropper and Mary Rogers have examined the ways in which sixteenth-century tracts and poetical analyses by writers such as Trissino or

⁹³Galliani, B3567, BCB. He records the Fantuzzi/Anguiscola marriage as taking place on November 10, 1595.

⁹⁴See *Poesie diverse e trascritte da me Eligio Banzi*. Book II, 1717, ms. A 361, BCB.

Firenzuola on the beauty of women can be seen to correspond, with obvious intent, to such paintings as Titian's portraits of Isabella d'Este or any number of his beauties such as the Venus of Urbino, Palma Vecchio's opulent blondes or Parmigianino's "Antea"⁹⁵. To compare Isabella Ruini and Costanza Isolani's portraits with such images as these might lead a modern day viewer to find the Bolognese women lacking in great beauty and wonder why such attention was lavished upon their looks. However, to do so is to misunderstand the nature of Bolognese society. Above all, Isabella and Costanza were "Gentildonne Bolognesi", praised by Bolognese men, painted by a Bolognese artist. Their status gave them an iconic role within their city which not only enhanced their beauty in the eyes of their fellow citizens, it also transcended it. Isabella Ruini was not only likened to the sun, she, and other noblewomen were also often described as stars. In the modern sense of the word, they were indeed stars in their city.

For the Bolognese nobility, much of their social life consisted of receiving and entertaining visiting dignitaries, some of whom were regular visitors to the city. Their visits generated a round of activities which would include banquets and balls, as well as formal receptions and leave-taking ceremonies, in which both the male and female nobility would assemble in coaches to greet and wave farewell to their guests. Such occasions also provided Lavinia Fontana with an opportunity for business.

A couple who, while local by birth, now lived for most of the time far away from Bologna, were Jacopo Boncompagni and his wife Costanza Sforza. Jacopo was the illegitimate son of Ugo Boncompagni, Pope Gregory XIII. On being elected Pope, Ugo

⁹⁵Elizabeth Cropper, "On beautiful women: Parmigianino, Petrarchismo and the vernacular style", *Art Bulletin*, 58, 1976, pp.374-394 and Mary Rogers, "The decorum of women's beauty: Trissino, Firenzuola, Luigini and the representation of women in sixteenth-century painting", *Renaissance Studies*, vol 2, No1, 1988, p.47-87.

lavished all kinds of awards and titles on his son. He bought him the Marquisate of Vignola and the Duchy of Sora, near Naples and also made him Governor of the Catholic Church⁹⁶. In 1576, Giacomo married the sixteen year old Costanza Sforza, the daughter of Sforza Sforza, the Count of Santa Fiore, near Parma. The bride was given a dowry of fifty thousand scudi, which exceeded the bride-price limit. Fortunately, Giacomo's father granted a Papal dispensation which allowed his son to accept this vast sum⁹⁷.

Lavinia Fontana's relationship with the Boncompagni is described by Malvasia, who asserted that she was particularly favoured by Gregory XIII. This particular relationship seems unlikely, as Lavinia was still in her infancy as a painter when Gregory was Pope and he was dead by 1581. It is more likely that her association with the family developed over the course of the 1580s, as did her relations with other noble families. By 1585, she was certainly well enough connected with the Boncompagni to ask Girolamo Boncompagni, Gregory's nephew (and Isabella Ruini's great uncle) to act as godfather to her child Orazio⁹⁸.

Lavinia would have initially met Giacomo Boncompagni and Costanza Sforza on one of their visits to Bologna. Visits by them recorded in chronicles suggest that they never stayed long in Bologna, but rather passed through the town on their way from Sora to Vignola (a few kilometers from Bologna). Malvasia states that Lavinia visited them

⁹⁶The documents relating to the awards and titles Ugo Boncompagni bestowed upon his son are to be found in the archive for the Ospedale di S. Maria della Morte e della Vita, Eredità Boncompagni, Serie II, 32, Nos 2-31, ASB.

⁹⁷Ospedale di Santa Maria della Morte e della Vita, Eredità Boncompagni, Series II, 31, Nos 31-36, ASB.

⁹⁸Gian Paolo Zappi, *Libro di Battismo, Documenti relativi a Lavinia Fontana*, 5 BCI.

in both Vignola and Sora. It seems likely that she could have stayed with them in Vignola while living in Bologna, but any visit to Sora must surely have taken place after she moved to Rome. It seem unlikely that the busy (and more or less constantly pregnant) painter had the time to undertake the lengthy journey from North to South.

There are no visits recorded in chronicles by the Sora Duke and Duchess for the 1580s (though that it is not to say that they did not occur). Galliani, Rinieri and Ghiselli all describe a visit by Giacomo and Costanza that took place on June 11, 1593⁹⁹. Sixty carriages of noble ladies and gentlemen met them and they went to stay with Girolamo Boncompagni, who lived in the Boncompagni Palace situated behind the church of San Pietro. Costanza is described as travelling to the palace in a carriage in the company of Beatrice Orsini, the wife of Piritteo Malvezzi, Elisabetta Bovi and Leona Leoni. As it happens, Elisabetta Bovi, the wife of Giulio Pepoli, was godmother in 1589 to Lavinia's son Prospero and Leona Leoni, the wife of Camillo Paleotti, was godmother in 1585 to the same Horatio Fontana-Zappi of whom Girolamo Boncompagni was the godfather.

It may be that it was on this occasion that Lavinia made sketches of Giacomo and Costanza that would serve as the models for her two portraits of the couple that are signed and dated 1594. Giacomo's portrait is now lost, although a coloured engraving of the picture made for Litta's *Famiglie celebri Italiane* is available, which depicts, three-quarter length, a bearded man dressed in black, with a sword tucked under his arm and

⁹⁹Galliani, *Diario*, BCB, Rinieri, Ms 434 BUB. Ghiselli, Ms 770, BUB provides the most complete account of the journey, describing the women who accompanied the Duchess and their exact destination.

a red cross embroidered on his doublet (Giacomo was a Knight of the Calatrava)¹⁰⁰. He rests his left hand on a table and holds a letter addressed to himself in his right.

Costanza's portrait (fig.28) in the Palazzo Ludovisi-Boncompagni in Rome and now in need of restoration, has her name and the dates of her birth and death inscribed on the bottom (possibly added in the eighteenth-century) ¹⁰¹. Like her husband, she is posed three-quarter length. On the table next to her stands a *cane Bolognese*, with jeweled collar and earrings whose paw she holds. The background is rendered architecturally, looking onto a facade of a building (whether it is a palace or a church is difficult to say) with a portico, on a column of which Lavinia inscribed her name and the date¹⁰².

As with other women painted by Fontana, much of Costanza's identity is presented by way of her clothes, which are particularly interesting. A close examination of them shows that they are not Bolognese in design. For example, the shape of her bodice is different, ending in a narrow point, and it is covered in a geometric pattern not seen in portraits of Bolognese noblewomen. On her cuffs Costanza wears what might be gold lace over heavier cuffs of brown material. Perhaps most surprising is the lace veil that Costanza wears over her face, which is attached to the lace fichu which covers her breast. Such a head covering, not seen in Northern Italian portraits, seems to have Southern

¹⁰⁰P. Litta, *Famiglie celebri Italiane* (Milan, 1839). Bartolomeo Galeotti, *Gli Huomini illustri di Bologna* (Bologna, 1881), p.118, states that Giacomo Boncompagni was a member of the Calatrava.

¹⁰¹Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), pp.170-171.

¹⁰²Carolyn Valone, "Roman Matrons as Patrons; Various views from the Cloister Wall", in Craig Monson, ed, *The Crannied Wall* (Chicago, 1990), gives an account of the religious patronage activities of Costanza's mother, Caterina.

connotations. What it leads one to conclude is that Costanza, Parmesan in origin, visiting her husband's family in Bologna, was anxious that her portrait record her new identity, that of a Duchess from Southern Italy. Clearly Costanza Sforza took her relationship with the Southern Duchy seriously; as a dowager she was responsible for the founding of a Jesuit church and college there¹⁰³.

It is interesting to think of Costanza Sforza Boncompagni travelling in a coach to Girolamo Boncompagni's palace in the company of two women who were godparents to Lavinia's children. Is it then, mere coincidence, that a year after Lavinia painted her portrait, Costanza became godmother to a Fontana child? The baby girl was given the name of Costanza¹⁰⁴. The relationship between Costanza and Lavinia may well have continued after the latter moved to Rome in 1605. There are indications that both families were living at one time in the parish of Santa Susanna in Rome¹⁰⁵.

A painting of the "Visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon", has been given an unquestionable attribution to Lavinia since Oretti's time (Dublin, National Gallery, fig. 29)¹⁰⁶. An inscription in Latin on the base of the stair in the left hand corner gives the biblical citation from which the scene is taken, in which the Queen of Sheba visited

¹⁰³Cantaro, (*Milan*, 1989), p.171.

¹⁰⁴Gian Paolo Zappi, *Libro di Battismo*. Lavinia's daughter was born on April 20th and baptised on the 23rd. Costanza Sforza was absent and Lucia Garzoni stood as proxy. The baby's godfather was Ottavio Bandini, the vice legate.

¹⁰⁵Costanza and Giacomo's son Francesco was born on January 21, 1596 and baptised in S. Susanna. Ospedale di S. Maria della Morte e della Vita, Eredità Boncompagni, *Istrumenti* 1593-1597, No 19, ASB. Galli's manuscript note no 246 on Lavinia Fontana in the *Imolesi Illustri*, BCI, (copied from documents no longer available) states that Lavinia's daughter Laudomia died on May 25, 1605 in the parish of S. Susanna in Rome.

¹⁰⁶Oretti, ms. B.104, c.87, BCB.

Solomon and presented him with gifts. Here, women in resplendent contemporary dress bear ^{ing}gold and jewels stand behind a Queen who kneels to Solomon. Since Lanzi, the painting has traditionally been held to be an allegorical depiction of the Mantuan Duke and Duchess with their retinue¹⁰⁷. The heads of the woman posing as the Queen of Sheba and her female attendants certainly seem to be portrait heads taken from the life. Eleanor Tufts proposed a specific identity for the figure of Solomon as being Vincenzo Gonzaga and his wife Eleonora de' Medici^{as Sheba}¹⁰⁸. Not only were they the Mantuan Duke and Duchess at the time, but they had a number of connections with the story of Sheba and Solomon: Torquato Tasso dedicated one of his *Dialoghi* to Vincenzo's mother, in which he compared virtuous women to the Queen of Sheba, and the Gonzaga family also possessed an onyx vase which they believed to have come from the temple of Solomon. Tufts asserted that the head of the Sheba figure had much in common with the head of Eleonora in Rubens' *Trinity worshipped by the Gonzaga family*, painted between 1604 and 1606 and that a coin containing the profile of Vincenzo Gonzaga had something in common with the profile of Solomon depicted in this painting. Tufts also pointed out that the Mantuan Duke and Duchess might well have come through Bologna in 1598, when Vincenzo visited Ferrara to pay respects to Pope Clement VIII, and in 1600, when Eleonora travelled to Florence for the wedding by proxy of Marie de' Medici to Henry IV of France.

Chronicles of Bologna prove Tufts was correct in her speculations about Vincenzo and Eleonora's visits to Bologna. In fact, they passed through on several occasions.

¹⁰⁷L. Lanzi, *Storia pittorica della Italia* (Bassano, 1789), vol III

¹⁰⁸Eleanor Tufts, "A Successful 16th Century Portrait Painter. Ms. (sic) Lavinia Fontana from Bologna", *Art News*, LXXVII, 1974, pp.60-64.

Rinieri records that Eleonora visited Bologna on April 26, 1584, and on September 18 of that year they stayed with Pirro Malvezzi on their way to Florence for the wedding of her niece¹⁰⁹. Ghiselli includes this event in his chronicle, adding that they had been met by all the Bolognese nobility, as many gentlemen as women, in particular those from the Malvezzi household¹¹⁰. Rinieri records that on January 15, 1585, on a return journey from Florence, they stayed again with Pirro Malvezzi. On May 19, 1589, Eleonora came alone to Bologna. On this occasion she stayed with Ercole dall'Armi and the following day a huge retinue of Bolognese lords and ladies in carriages accompanied her as far as the Porta S. Felice for her return journey to Mantua. Eleonora was alone again when in June of 1600 she visited Bologna, on her way to Florence to pay her respects to the new Queen of France (Marie de' Medici) and she stayed in the house of Francesco dall'Armi (Ercole's son)¹¹¹.

Judging by these chroniclers' narration of events, Eleonora de' Medici had a much closer relationship with Bologna than did her husband. On at least two occasions, she travelled and stayed in Bologna alone. The Bolognese nobility, without a royalty of their own, doubtless developed a sense of pride in this connection with a woman who was both a Medici Princess and a Gonzaga Duchess. While the circumstances of the commission of Lavinia's unusual painting of the *Queen of Sheba* outlined below are speculative, they do nonetheless conform to Bolognese social practises. Stylistically, the painting bears a close resemblance to Lavinia's work around 1600, so the commission was most likely

¹⁰⁹Rinieri, ms 434, BUB.

¹¹⁰Ghiselli, ms 770, BUB.

¹¹¹Coincidentally, these are the same dall'Armis whose negotiations with Costanza Alidosi Isolani are described above.

undertaken during the time of Eleonora's visit to Bologna en route to visit her niece in Florence now she was the Queen of France. What further confirms such a speculation is that in Lavinia's painting, the Queen's 's head has been taken from the life, indicating that the artist observed and at least sketched Eleonora, while that of Solomon is rendered in a much more historicised fashion, the kind of image that could have been taken from a profile on a coin.

The patron of this picture was possibly a member of the dall'Armi family with whom Eleonora stayed in 1600 and with whom the Gonzagas had stayed before. If there is no direct connection known between Lavinia and the dall'Armi family, then they were certainly connected to nobles known to be acquainted with her¹¹². It seems fairly certain that a visiting dignitary would at least express curiosity over the phenomenon that was Lavinia Fontana and an introduction could easily have been arranged between the Gonzaga Duchess and the Bolognese painter.

The most likely candidate for patronage was Francesco dall'Armi, who was Papal treasurer in Bologna. He perhaps desired a painting that would display his family's ties with this member of two prestigious families. Certainly the patron was one familiar with Gonzaga family history and culture in that he or she must have known the Tasso reference pointed out by Tufts and that there was a Gonzaga connection with the temple of Solomon. The patron may also have visited the Mantuan court. He knew the breed of hunting dog they kept, the fondness they had for dwarves, recorded visually a century ago

¹¹²Costanza Isolani and the dall'Armis were at least business acquaintances. Dolfi (*Bologna, 1770*) states that Francesco dall'Armi became a member of the Antiani along with Mario Casale, who stood as the proxy for his brother Vincenzo, the Bishop of Massa at the baptism of Lavinia's child Severo on June 7, 1587. See the section on children's portraiture in chapter 6 for more on Lavinia's relationship with this family.

by Mantegna. The scene also brings to mind Federico Zuccaro's description of his visit to the Mantuan court in December of 1603. Here he describes the extraordinary and exquisite costumes ladies of the court wore at the wedding of Francesco Gonzaga to Margherita of Savoy¹¹³.

This picture is one of the most compositionally troubling paintings by Lavinia, in that it is quite apparent that the heads of the female retinue were painted at a different time from their bodies. One reason for this may be that the faces are those of Eleonora's ladies-in-waiting, whom Lavinia sketched and painted while they were before her, and added their bodies later in her studio. It could simply be that it was a large painting that she was required to hurry over and was unable to spend much time on an anatomical problem with which she often displayed difficulty. However, that these women were Eleonora's ladies-in-waiting is only a matter of speculation, prompting the question, who else might they have been? Much is made in the chronicles of Rinieri and Ghiselli, of the Bolognese noble women who attended and accompanied female dignitaries visiting Bologna, but little attention is paid to any retinue these dignitaries might bring with them.

There is, therefore, a possibility that the faces of these ladies attending the Queen of Sheba are representations of Bolognese noblewomen, ladies of the dall'Armi family in the first instance, who would attend Eleonora during her visit. Including Bolognese noble women in this painting in would have given those ladies themselves, the patron of the work and the painter herself an opportunity to recreate the kind of court life which, as citizens of Bologna, they were otherwise denied. Yet Lavinia Fontana's relationship with,

¹¹³Federico Zuccaro, *Il Passaggio per Italia con la dimora del Sig. Cavaliere Federico Zuccaro. Dove si narrano fra molte altre cose le feste e trionfi Regii fatti in Mantova da quella Altezza: Per le Nozze del Serenissimo Principe Francesco Gonzaga suo Figliuolo con la Serenissima Infante Margherita di Savoia* (Bologna, 1608).

and representations of, Bolognese noblewomen, ultimately allowed them a much stronger sense of visual identity (combined with a social identity) than they would ever have obtained, had they spent their lives as courtiers in Mantua or Ferrara.

This chapter has examined various representations of the female nobility in Bologna. It has brought to light how they could spend their time and money in religious artistic patronage, what art might mean to them, how they dressed and how one can read the significance of their costume, how women spent their time socially, and how others might perceive and admire them. Against such a background, the next two chapters will examine how some women combined acting as patrons of Lavinia Fontana with personal agendas which concerned their role within their families and their relationships with power, piety, money and sometimes even justice.

CHAPTER FOUR

**LAUDOMIA GOZZADINI
AND
HER FAMILY PORTRAIT**

In 1584, Lavinia Fontana received her first documentable commission from a Bolognese noble woman, Laudomia Gozzadini. The Gozzadini family and their remarkably well preserved, extensive archive was drawn upon in the previous chapter, to demonstrate the men as the purchasers and the women as wearers of the clothes and jewels that formed part of the bride's *corredo*. Two of those Gozzadini brides, Ginevra dall'Armi Gozzadini and Violante Gozzadini, were also mentioned when they went on to show their defiance of family inheritance norms by choosing to make the Jesuits and their associates their heirs. The Gozzadini family also had a history as enthusiastic patrons of the arts; they were among the few Bolognese families whose members commissioned paintings from Parmigianino during his residence in Bologna¹. Laudomia Gozzadini continued this tradition of innovative artistic patronage when she selected Lavinia Fontana to paint a picture of her family.

Laudomia's commission was for a group portrait, (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna), depicting Laudomia herself and four of her relatives (fig.30). It measured 2.5 m by 1.89m, (8ft by 7ft) which is astonishingly large for a portrait of this period in Bologna, and is certainly the largest surviving painting of this genre in Lavinia's own *oeuvre*. As in some of the latter's portraits of illustrious men, such as those of Carlo Sigonio and Francesco Panigarola, the picture's background is an architectural construction, with

¹Bonifazio Gozzadini is documented as being one of Parmigianino's Bolognese patrons, probably the commissioner of the "Madonna of St. Zachary" (Florence, Uffizi) in 1533. The "portrait of a lady" by Parmigianino (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), is believed to be of Bonifazio's wife, Ginevra.

a doorway and corridor giving onto another room with a window, a device which convincingly contrives to suggest that the pictorial space is a continuation of actual space. This background, combined with the life-size nature of the figures succeeds in giving the picture a three dimensional effect and gives the impression that these figures are real, actually seated in the same room as the viewer. At the same time, the enormous painting resembles a stage set, complete with props where the sitters are actors between whom there is a palpable tension.

Fortunately, there is a script to aid in interpreting the unspoken dialogue. Lavinia signed the painting on the base of the chair on the right hand side, "*Lavinia Fontana de Zappis facie 1584*". On the back of the painting an inscription was written, no longer visible since the painting was relined, which gave the identities of the portrait's subjects. Corresponding to the position of the oldest man, in the centre of the picture, is the inscription identifying him as Ulisse Gozzadini, Senator, who died at the age of fifty six on the fifteenth of November 1561. and the father of Ginevra and Laudomia. The woman on the right is identified as "Ginevra Gozzadini, who died at the age of twenty eight on the fifteenth of March 1581. For the man above her the inscription reads: "Annibale Gozzadini, living at the age of forty five, the husband of Ginevra". On his left, the man standing is "Camillo Gozzadini, living at the age of thirty seven, the husband of Laudomia and a Knight of Jesus Christ". Finally, the woman seated on the left is "Laudomia Gozzadini, living at the age of thirty, she has had made this present work"². Thus, there is no ambiguity that this picture is

²The inscriptions read as follows: *Ulisse Gozadini Senatore/Di Anni LVI Morse adi XV/Novembre Del MDLXI/Fu Padre Di Ginevra Et Laudomia. Ginevra Gozadini Di/Anni XXVIII Morse Adi/ XV Marzo MDLXXXI. Annibale Gozadini/Vivente Di Anni XXXXV/Marito di Ginevra.Camillo Gozadini Vivente/Di Anni XXXVII Marito/Di Laudomia Caval(o)/Di Iesu Christo.Laudomia Gozadini/ Vivente di Anni XXX/Fece Fare La Presente/Opera*

Laudomia Gozzadini's own commission. She recorded this information for posterity.

The portrait has attracted attention in the centuries since its production, even at times when Lavinia Fontana herself was all but forgotten. At least one copy was made of it, probably some time during the seventeenth-century³. In 1839, Pompeo Litta in his *Famiglie Celebre Italiane* used it as an illustration of Gozzadini family dynasty⁴. In 1882, a descendant of the Gozzadinis, Giovanni Gozzadini, and one who had partially read his family archive, published an article on the picture after he identified that the jewels that the women wore in the portrait corresponded to those described by Camillo Gozzadini in his 1569-70 *Libro di Ricordi*, which had been bought for their weddings⁵. He saw the picture as a kind of wedding portrait. In 1911 the portrait was exhibited at the first major exhibition of Italian portraiture, *Il Ritratto Italiano*, in Florence at the Palazzo Vecchio. Mario Praz used the portrait as an early example of the memento mori in his 1971 book, "Conversation Pieces"⁶. In the more recent work of Fontana scholars such as Maria Teresa Cantaro and Vera Fortunati Pietrantonio, the portrait is seen as representing a kind of "social discipline"⁷. They see an idealised family solidarity, of the kind promoted by Gabriele Paleotti, in his emphasis of the

³Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.120 and V.F. Pietrantonio (*Milan, 1994* -), p.192-3 refer to the copies of this picture but seem unsure if there is more than one copy, or of its whereabouts.

⁴Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie Celebre Italiane*, III, (Milan, 1839), tav XII.

⁵Giovanni Gozzadini, "Di alcuni gioielli notati in un libro di ricordo del sec. XVI e di un quadro di Lavinia Fontana", in *Atti e Memorie della Regia Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province di Romagna* (Bologna, 1882-1883), pp. 1-16.

⁶Mario Praz, *Conversation Pieces: A Survey of the Informal Group Portrait in Europe and America* (London, 1971), p.209.

⁷M. T. Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.120, V.F. Pietrantonio (*Milan/Bologna, 1994*), p.192.

need for strength and solidity in the Catholic family. The way in which dead family members have been honoured, the partial joining of hands and pointing gestures are seen as particularly important to this interpretation.

This enormous picture is not only a micro-history of the five people concerned, but also a conscious attempt by Laudomia to ensure that their history was transmitted to posterity. She (with the skill of her chosen painter) assumes the role^{of} narrator of her work. The inscription on the Gozzadini portrait effectively provides the key to the picture. Laudomia, who was clearly so insistent that she be remembered as having made the present work, apparently wanted to ensure that information on the identities of her other family members was not lost either⁸. Superficially at least, this record would appear to concur with the notion that this picture is one representing family solidarity and longevity. However, using these initial clues to the identity of the sitters, one can begin to recover from the Gozzadini family archive a much deeper and darker story concerning Laudomia and her family. This story is one which involves manipulation, fear, greed, deception, anger, envy, frustration and adultery. What is in fact presented to the viewer of the Gozzadini family portrait is one woman's rendering of her life story, and personal drama.

Who was Laudomia Gozzadini? By the late 1570s she and her sister Ginevra had attained the kind of status as Bolognese society matrons which earned them a line in Alessandro Griffoni's *Discorso della Nobiltà delle Donne* in which they earn praise as "the

⁸It is interesting that another woman patron also had an inscription on the back of painting she commissioned, using the same kind of language: Suor Alessandra Ratta commissioned a painting of the Birth of the Baptist from Ludovico Carracci for the church of San Giovanni Battista at the beginning of the seventeenth-century. An inscription on the back of the painting begins: "*Sor Alesandra de Rata fece fare questa pittura a M. Ludovico Caraci Pitore..*" See Emiliani, ed. (Bologna, 1993), p.243.

two most noble sisters, so charming and graceful"⁹. After her sister's death Laudomia is commended in Hercole Marescotti's *Dell' Eccellenza della Donna* of 1589, a work partly devoted to praise of Bolognese noblewomen, in the following terms:

"The divine qualities of Laudomia Gozzadini can be found through her illustrious name and noble blood. Her hair and eyes will not bring us down to the blind and earthly love which can lead to a thousand sins, but instead will inspire us to a heavenly love, whose view is so clear that it could not cast a single shadow, and therefore she is a work beyond nature. The softness of her speech does not merely delight our hearing externally, but instead pierces the better part of the soul, so that one is left as if dead or insensible"¹⁰.

In the anonymous *Lode delle Donne Bolognesi* written around the same time as Marescotti's verses, Laudomia Gozzadini is *La gentilezza del mondo*, and his verse describes her as leading such a truly honourable life that she has the ability to change everyone for the better¹¹. While it is unlikely the softness of Laudomia's speech could render the listener insensible, nor induce goodness in the souls of others, these "laude" serve to illustrate her rank in Bolognese society. She took her place with the other fashionable ladies who are described in these texts. But such literary testimony is obviously not enough to understand

⁹Alessandro Griffoni, *Discorso della Nobilità delle Donne*, miscellani, AAB. "Non taccio le due gentilissime sorelle, l'À Signora Geneva et la Signora Laudomia Goggiadini, due si vaghe et si gratiose, quant'altre che vivono".

¹⁰Hercole Marescotti (Bologna, 1589): "Lode della Signora Laudomia Gozzadini, La cui divine qualita se ricerarvorremo, le troveremo pari alla chiarezza del nome et del suo nobilissimo sangue. Impercioche ne gli occhi suoi non spira quel cieco e terreno amore, che a vili e sordide operatione per mille pericoli ci conduce; ma quel celestiale che ha cosi sottil vista e percio opera in noi cose sopra natura, non solo estremamente diletandoci l'udito, e la vita con la souavità del parlare; ma col rapirici in quel diletto si fattamente la parte superiore del animo, che è lascia talvolta come morti e insensati.."

¹¹Poesie in lode di varie Dame Bolognese BUB, MS 1207:

"Laudomia Gozzadini Gozzadini/Gentilezza del mondo/Vera vita d' honor/Chi non onde pervoi di ghiacono ha il cori/Ma per quel ch'io mi creder/Mutato in te si ch'ognun obliva/Cosi parmi gentile/L'aspetto tuo ch'a lui no e simile"

the circumstances of Laudomia's life.

Laudomia's illustrious name and noble blood might have been assured on her father Ulisse's side, but are not so certain on her mother's. Senator Ulisse Gozzadini had been Bolognese Ambassador in Rome and Florence¹². His wife Violante, whom he married in 1538, came from a distinguished Bolognese family, the Orsi. However, she was not the mother of Laudomia or of her sister Ginevra. Ulisse Gozzadini records Ginevra's and Laudomia's births in his *Libro di Ricordi*, and says that they are born to *la stessa madre*, without actually naming her¹³. The difference in the women's appearance is enough to make one speculate whether or not they had the *stesso padre*. When it became evident that Violante was not going to produce any children, Ulisse began proceedings to legitimise the two girls. The legitimisation actually took place two years after Ulisse's death, in 1563¹⁴. This practise of legitimising children in an absence of legitimate ones, common in the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries, receded in the seventeenth-century¹⁵.

The evidence which relates to Ulisse Gozzadini during the last years of his life and shortly after his death, presents a man desperately worried about his lack of a male heir. He was a *capofamiglia*, a patriarch, head of a line, an enormously wealthy man and one who did not want his own particular branch of the Gozzadini clan to die and his estate to go elsewhere. His point of departure was the need to perpetuate his own line. He pinned his

¹²Pompeo Scipione Dolfi (*Bologna, 1770/1990*), pp.388-389.

¹³Ulisse Gozzadini, *Libro di Ricordi*, Archivio Gozzadini, vol II, BCB.

¹⁴10 November, 1563, *Legittimazione di Ginevra e Laodomia d' Ulisse Gozzadini*, Archivio Gozzadini, *Istrumenti* 163, Nos 10-13.

¹⁵Gérard Delille, "Consanguinité proche en Italie du XVI^e au XIX^e siècle", in *Epouser au plus proche. Inceste, prohibitions et stratégies matrimoniales autour de la Méditerranée* (Paris, 1991),

hopes on his legitimised daughters and conceived a strategy. He chose whom the girls were to marry extremely carefully. In order to ensure that his name did not die out, he proceeded to arrange marriages for them to men with the same family name, albeit from a different branch. This practise was quite common during this period and is characterised by Gérard Delille as "*épouser au plus proche*"¹⁶. In this way, the legitimising process of the two girls would be strengthened by contracting a marriage with an already legitimate Gozzadini man and wealth would remain within the clan. The husbands Ulisse elected for his daughters were members of the Gozzadini family, but only quite distantly related to the girls. They were beyond the six degrees of separation that would have required an expensive dispensation from the Pope for the marriage to go ahead.

Ulisse also created a fall back situation in the event that the girls died young or without issue. He left a large legacy to his nephew Fabritio with the provision that it could pass on to his *filiis masculos legitimos*¹⁷. As it happened, Fabritio would have disappointed him as he produced just one girl, Anna. The money Ulisse left this family was to affect his own descendants later in their lives.

The two men Ulisse chose to be husbands for his daughters were closely related but in quite different financial circumstances. Annibale Gozzadini, who was to be Ginevra's husband, was the eldest son of Alessandro Gozzadini, a legitimate son of Gabbion Gozzadini, who had been the patriarch of another branch of the Gozzadini family. Camillo Gozzadini, destined for Laudomia, was the younger son of Gian Battista Gozzadini, a legitimised son of Gabbion. Ginevra, the elder daughter, therefore made the wealthier and more prestigious

¹⁶Delille, *ut supra*, note 15.

¹⁷April 5, 1561, *Donatione facta ad favorem di Fabritio Gozzadini, nipote d'Ulisse Gozzadini*, Archivio Gozzadini, *Istrumenti* 161.

match.

At the time of the drawing up of the marriage contract, Camillo Gozzadini was being trained in Ferrara for some kind of courtly position. He apparently learned his lessons as in later life he would be Bolognese ambassador to Rome and Ferrara. In the 1560s he was acting as a page at the court of Ferrara (Bologna having no court to provide such a training). Annibale was a member of the elite group, the *Antiani*, who served in a judicial capacity in Bologna. He was older by eight years than Camillo and by fourteen and fifteen years than Ginevra and Laudomia and was elected, either by Ulisse before his death, or by the trustees of his estate to perform a great deal of the organisation of the marriages, which took place in 1570.

There was clearly some difficulty in finding members of the Gozzadini family who were willing to take Ulisse's daughters as brides, despite their legitimised state. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Ulisse's sister, Pantasilea, signed an affidavit on December 10, 1568 stating that the girls "did not please any member of the Gozzadini family", except for "M. Annibale and that nice little boy who has been staying with Cardinal d'Este, who say that they (Laudomia and Ginevra) please them and have said the same to his (Ulisse's) wife Violante"¹⁸.

In the document the future spouses had to sign agreeing to the conditions of the marriage, insistence was made that the marriages be "public", as in accordance with decrees

¹⁸10 December, 1568, Rogito d'Alessandro Chiocca, Archivio Notarile 6/2, p.160, ASB. The extract concerning the two girls and Camillo and Annibale reads: "*sopra le sue (referring to Ulisse) putte, mi disso che per conto di dette putte non gli piacena alcuno della famiglia di Gozzadini, ma che pur ci era M. Annibale e qual piccolo che era tutto gentile et ci era ano quello che sta col Cardinal d'Este che gli piace et dissi d'haver anco detto a Madonna Violante sua consorte et questa è la mia verita...*"

newly made by the Council of Trent¹⁹. Thus, in some ways, the old world and the new met in the figures of Ginevra and Laudomia: they had been legitimised according to old practise, but were to be married in accordance with new practices under church control - theirs could not be weddings based merely on promises tendered, from which the spouses could extricate themselves at a later date if they so chose.

Ulisse left the couples eight hundred gold scudi each for the expense of the wedding and the womens' wedding clothes and to set up house²⁰. This sum was in addition to the dowries that Ulisse left his daughters. For a dowry they received the sum of three thousand Bolognese pounds, which was specified in his will - not an abnormally large sum for women of their status in Bologna²¹. This money was to be invested, and their husbands were to receive seven percent of its value each year - a sum that was to be paid out as usufruct, to be passed onto their wives after expenses for their upkeep were deducted, by the trustees of Ulisse's estate at Christmas, Easter and the middle of August.²²

The dowry was the legal renunciation of a woman's claim to any other stake in a father's property. Ulisse Gozzadini never had any intention of making either Ginevra or

¹⁹This document was written on December 10, 1569. *Scritture dal 1392-1679* Archivio Gozzadini, Vol 396. It states: "*Li infrascritti servono gli'ordini et capitoli che si dovranno servare da quelli che pigharono per mogli le figliole della buona memoria del quondam S. Ulisse Gozzadini, et dalli signori commissarii rispettivamente*". The fifth provision to which the spouses must agree concerns the marriages taking place publicly: "*Quinto, che sposalitio si debba publicare canonicamente secondo il decreto del Sacro Concilio*".

²⁰*Ut Supra* preceding note: "*Terza, che si debba date a ciascun sposo ottocento scudi d'oro in oro per provvedere le spese de locali caso..*"

²¹*Testamento d'Ulisse Gozzadini*, 26 October, 1566 (*Rogito d'Alessandro Chiocca*), Archivio Gozzadini, *Istrumenti* 164, No 3.

²²*Ut Supra*, note 19.

Laudomia *erede universalis* to his estate. He thought of them in genealogical terms, as little more than reproductive objects to his greater purpose. In the same will where he specified the sums of their dowries, Ulisse named his *erede universalis*. It states: "He (Ulisse) nominates as his universal heir the first legitimate male son who is born of one of the legitimate marriages contracted by one of his two daughters with one of the Gozzadini families"²³. In other words, through his fear of seeing his inheritance pass into the hands of a foreign clan, Ulisse Gozzadini initiated a competition between Laudomia and Ginevra when they were little more than six or seven. The weapons with which they were to compete were their bodies. This competition would shape their futures, their attitudes towards each other, and their husbands' attitudes towards their wives.

Camillo Gozzadini next takes up the story of the Gozzadini marriages. As one learns from the *Libro di Ricordi* that he kept, he returned from Ferrara at the end of October 1569 at the age of twenty two²⁴. Of paramount importance to him in his *libro* were the jewels that were being bought for the two women, which for some reason were being purchased by his brother (as opposed to his brother-in-law) Annibale from April of 1569 onwards. All in all, twenty eight pieces of jewelry were bought, which included necklaces comprised of fifty five oriental pearls, a gold and agate coronet and other jeweled headdresses, girdles made of gold, golden bracelets, earrings, wedding rings. These were the jewels that Giovanni Gozzadini in his 1882 article identified in the portrait, Laudomia and Ginevra's pearl necklaces and those

²³cf, *ut supra*, note 21. The condition reads as follows: "*Il suo herede universale et nomina il primo figliolo masculo legitimo et naturale chi nacesse di legitimo matrimonio contratto d'uno delle famiglie delle dette due figliole*"

²⁴Camillo's *Libro di Ricordi*, mentioned in the previous chapter on the section on the contents of a bride's *corredo*, seems to have been compiled by him at a later date in his life to the events he describes, as his handwriting and the inks are always alike. It may be that he copied the contents of an old *Libro di Ricordi* into the existing one.

made of gold, their girdles of gold and pearls, bracelets, rings and earrings and jeweled headdresses²⁵. Additionally, one crimson and one white satin dress were purchased which also correspond with those worn by the women.

In addition to the descriptions of the wedding regalia, Camillo writes about the festivities and ceremonies surrounding his marriage. He describes seeing his wife for the first time at Mass at the church of San Vitale on November 9, 1569. He also met Violante Orsi Gozzadini, whom he describes as his future mother-in-law, and a number of the trustees of Ulisse's estate. On March 10, 1570, Laudomia visited his own mother and on April 6, 1570, he and Laudomia were married. Laudomia was taken up to their bed-chamber at half past two at night and that event was recorded by Alessandro Chiocca, the notary of Ulisse Gozzadini's estate, as proof that the marriage was consummated. Following the marriage the festivities continued, with enormous dinner parties, including one for fifty "Gentildonne"²⁶.

Camillo kept up his diary for some time after his marriage. He had come back to Bologna with a ready made place in Bolognese high society. He was made a Knight of Jesus Christ of the Portuguese Cross, a spiritual/chivalric company, sponsored by the King of Portugal, whose members were nobles²⁷. Camillo was also initially interested in Laudomia's

²⁵See Chapter Three, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone" on the relationship between the *corredo* and female portraiture in Bologna.

²⁶Giovanni Gozzadini transcribes these extracts from Camillo's *Libri di Ricordi* in his article (*Bologna, 1882-3*).

²⁷In *Istrumenti* 165, Archivio Gozzadini, there are two folders whose contents are missing, but written on the outside of one is: "2 Genaro, 1570, Lettera dall Re di Portogallo a favore di Camillo Gozzadini" and on the other, "11 Agosto, 1570, Creatione di Camillo Gozzadini in Cavagliere di Portogallo". By this point in time, the quasi-monastic, celibate nature of the military religious orders had been abandoned in some parts, Desmond Seward, *The Monks of War, The Military Religious Orders* (London, 1972, revised, 1995). For the Bolognese male nobility, they clearly functioned as a sort of social club to gain prestige and influence. Bartolomeo Galeotti,

social life, recording her social gatherings with other noblewomen of her rank, and in particular, her presiding over the preparations for taking his sister Aurelia to the Benedictine convent of Saint Ursula to make her vows. As a nun, perhaps in recognition of her affection for her sister-in-law, Aurelia chose to take the name of "Suor Laudomia"²⁸. However, such social niceties soon give way to the recording of something far more ominous for himself: his sister-in-law Ginevra's ability to give birth to sons who survived. No doubt that if Laudomia's body was a reproductive object to perpetuate Ulisse's line, it was also a reproductive object to bring Camillo the management of wealth as the father of a *capo-famiglia*. Camillo, as a second son, had little personal wealth.

Camillo kept a close record of the competition for the heir to Ulisse's vast estate, but Ginevra was soon leading by lengths. Laudomia must have become pregnant almost on the night of her marriage, as she gave birth to Laura, born prematurely on December 15th, 1570, who died four days later. On August 8th, 1571, Ginevra gave birth for the first time to a son, Ulisse, who was soon to be declared *erede universale* to his grandfather's estate. Before her own death in 1581, Ginevra gave birth six more times, including four sons, of whom two, Brandeliglio and Claudio lived. For Laudomia, Fulvia followed Laura, born on January 6, 1572, and dying on the 27th, Berenice born on August 1, 1573 and Placidia on April 11,

Gli Huomini Illustri di Bologna (Bologna, 1592) gives a list of the *Cavallieri* belonging to different orders in Bologna. Camillo's companions in the *Cavallieri di Portogallo* included Francesco Maria Casali, Annibale Campeggi and Ettore Ghisilieri, all from prestigious Bolognese families.

²⁸Camillo describes this event as taking place on March 26th, 1571. Aurelia Gozzadini went up to the convent with Laudomia and Costanza Alidosi Isolani, among other women. She took the name Laudomia on December 30th, 1571 and she professed on November 15th, 1574 before Bishop Gabriele Paleotti.

1575, who both lived to adulthood. Isabetta, born on May 12, 1577, died the next day²⁹.

Between 1579 and 1584 there followed the births of three sons for whom Camillo was still clearly hopeful. Children could so easily die, especially in the plague years of Bologna - and if Camillo could have just one son who could live to adulthood, it was a potential card to play against Annibale's three sons and a chance, however slight, that the Ulisse Gozzadini fortune would go to one of Camillo's descendants. However, it was not to be so. Vincenzo, born to Laudomia on November 17, 1579 described by Camillo as "the first male child I have had by my wife Laudomia" died on the 21st. Vincenzo the second, fared a little better: born on November 11th, 1581, died on June 9th, 1582. But the most terrible death for all concerned was that of Gian Battista, who was born on October 2nd 1584, and who died on the 27th. Very deliberately, Camillo records the circumstances of his death. Gian Battista was sent on October 7th to a *balia* (wet nurse), Gentile Marchione, who had been a *donzella* (a maidservant, or perhaps a protégée) of Laudomia. Gian Battista was flourishing, Camillo writes, until the night of October 27th, 1584 when Gentile rolled over in bed and suffocated

²⁹Camillo also keeps an account of his own children's godparents in his *Libro*. The godfather to his first child Laura, was Giovanni Pepoli; Fulvia's godmother was Laura Pepoli, her godfather Cavalier Casali, who was a Senator and a Knight of the Portuguese Cross. Berenice's godfather was Camillo's patron, Cardinal d'Este, her godmother Cecilia Bargellini Boncompagni. Placidia had Hippolita Guarnieri, a Ferrarese noblewoman as a godmother and Gio: Galeazzo Bargellini as a godfather (his wife Costanza Bianchetti Bargellini would be godmother to Lavinia Fontana's daughter Laudomia in 1588). Isabetta's godparents were Alessandro Legnani and Lucia Garzoni (who stood as proxy for Costanza Sforza when she was godmother to Lavinia's daughter Costanza in 1595). Vincenzo's godparents were Giacomo Tortorelli and Caterina de Bianchi. Vincenzo II's godfather was Cardinal Cesi (The Bolognese papal legate), his godmother Orsina Volta Campeggi. Finally, Gio: Battista's godfather was Leonardo Roscelli, the governor of Imola.

the child³⁰. The diary entry is terse, but makes clear that Gentile was Laudomia's choice as her servant, reared and trained by her. Implicit in the record is blame for his wife. After Gian Battista, there were no more children for Laudomia. She was only thirty and as she had evidently little difficulty conceiving, it seems likely that she and Camillo terminated their sexual relationship. Following the death of this last son, Camillo makes almost no mention of Laudomia and her activities in his *Libro di Ricordi* again. There were no more pregnancies to record.

The birth of the male heir to Ginevra and Annibale Gozzadini and Ginevra's death were to give Laudomia's brother-in-law a great deal of power over her financially. A month after the birth of Ulisse "*Iuniore*" as he was known, the trustees of Ulisse Gozzadini's estate declared him the *erede universale* and Annibale, as a gesture of good will, made some property over to Camillo Gozzadini in compensation for losing out on those vast riches³¹. Two years later, in 1576, after several of the now elderly trustees to the estate had died, those remaining decided that it would be best that Annibale and his father Alessandro should take over the administration of the estate³². This was not only a matter of holding it in trust for

³⁰ Camillo's record of the tragic event reads as follows: "7 Ottobre, si mando Gio: Battista a Balia, alla Gentile, che fu donzella di mia mogle et allevata da lei, et figlia di M. Marchione, che fa le Carozze all' Incontro S. Bartolomeo di Porto, che cosi il S. Iddio li dia esser suo buon servo in questo mondo e in l'altro. Il sudetto putto stava benissimo - ma la detta Gentile sua Balia alle 27 Ott. del medesimo anno 1584, nella notte della vigilia si S. Simone e Giudo, se l'affogo sotto di lei, la quale s'adormato sopra del povero putto - et il giorno seguente con otto Canonici Regulari dell'ordine si S. Giovanni in Monte fu sepolito nell Arca delgi Innocenti".

³¹ 3 September, 1574, *Locatione dei Commissari d'Ulisse Gozzadini ad Annibale et Camillo Gozzadini di diversi beni. Istrumenti* 167, Archivio Gozzadini.

³² 30 November, 1576, *Rinuncia dell'ammistrare de Beni d'Ulisse Gozzadini fatti dalli diversi Commissari ad Alessandro et Annibale Gozzadini. Istrumenti* 168, No. 30, Archivio Gozzadini.

Ulisse the younger, it also involved maintaining and paying out money to other beneficiaries of Ulisse's will. It meant for example that Annibale controlled the paying out of the usufruct of Laudomia's dowry³³. It was unusual for a man to control his sister-in-law's money in this way.

Ginevra's death also joined Annibale and Laudomia in other financial arrangements that he contrived to control. Laudomia and Ginevra had been left the *erede universale* by two of their female relatives: their father's wife Violante chose to make over her dowry to them in her will. The more usual practise was to return the money on her death to her family and that she did not do so suggests that she disliked her Orsi relatives and that she felt no acrimony towards her husband's bastard children³⁴. Anna, the daughter of the Fabritio Gozzadini upon whom Ulisse Gozzadini had bestowed money, did the same thing as Violante³⁵. Their deaths, in 1579 and 1580 left Ginevra and Laudomia with about 2000 libras Bononiensis each, which added considerably to the usufruct on their own dowries. It was decided that Laudomia and Ginevra should pool their resources and buy land together³⁶. This

³³See, for example, a document for June 25th, 1578, *Assegnatione d'Ulisse Gozzadini a Camillo Gozzadini di Tereno in Prunaro*. *Istrumenti* 169, Archivio Gozzadini. The assignment of the land in Prunaro to Camillo represented a portion of Laudomia's money that had been invested in this apparently fertile farmland.

³⁴25 June, 1578. *Testamento di Violante Orsi Gozzadini*. *Istrumenti*, 169, No. 18, Archivio Gozzadini. It is also clear that Violante had no empathy for her Orsi relatives, as she left them nothing.

³⁵June 22nd, 1577. *Testamento d'Anna di Fabritio Gozzadini*, *Istrumenti* 168, No. 42, Archivio Gozzadini. Anna left Violante Orsi Gozzadini as her initial *erede universale*, stating that she had always been like a mother to her ("*quam semper loco matris habuit*") and then in the event of Violante's death substituted Laudomia and Ginevra.

³⁶9 December, 1580, *Conto e Saldo tra Ginevra e Laudomia Gozzadini*, *Istrumenti*, 170, No.23.

was done for both of them by Annibale when Ginevra died a year later (and he thereby became the beneficiary of her legacies). Annibale maintained management of the money, invested it in land and agreed to pay Laudomia a portion of the interest on the land each year. Laudomia's finances and such autonomy as she had were then in Annibale's hands.

It was perhaps the death of her last son, Gian Battista, in 1584, that caused Laudomia to take stock of her situation. By 1584, Laudomia must have been experiencing a feeling of entrapment. She had failed as reproductive object. She was not the means by which her father's grand design would be achieved and she would not be the means to great financial standing for her husband. Her baby boys had died and her husband implicated her in the accidental death of her last son. The couple were clearly estranged, as will presently be confirmed. Camillo already had illegitimate sons. It is well-known that patrician wives had to tolerate and accommodate this "weakness" on their husband's part, but how they felt about it is not recorded³⁷. A childless wife however must have been particularly sensitive to this situation. Laudomia's sister was dead. Ginevra was in part responsible for her predicament. She had been the one to produce the male heir and it is hard to imagine that those around them would not have commented on Ginevra's fecundity and contrasted it with that of her sister. They were sisters nonetheless and had known each other all their lives. Furthermore, Ginevra had been a contact with Annibale, whom Laudomia already had reason to believe was not trustworthy. Evidence that will be examined later indicates that from 1579 onwards he had begun to hold back on paying out money to her. With her sister gone, Laudomia was alone, with an indifferent husband, a financially unscrupulous brother-in-law and the

³⁷In Cavalier Pietro Belmonte, *Institutione della Sposa* (Rome, 1587), which he wrote for his daughter, coincidentally also called Laudomia) on the occasion of her wedding, he states on page 46 that a wife must be tolerant of her husband's *infermità*.

memories of a dead sister and six dead children. The commission for the portrait therefore, may have come at a moment of truth, loneliness and possibly post-partum depression for Laudomia.

Laudomia Gozzadini was not a literary woman. Her signature at the bottom of legal documents suggests someone to whom writing did not come particularly easy and it is unlikely that she kept a *libro di ricordi* in the same way her husband did. As a better educated woman in the nineteenth century she might have written a book to document the drama and uneasiness of her situation. She was however someone with a strong sense of the visual and an awareness of the power of the portrait as a means of ensuring that its subject would be remembered. Of the few documents surviving in her hand is a record of the death of her daughter, Placidia, who had chosen to go into a convent, in 1619. After describing her holiness that lead to her fasting three times a week, Laudomia writes "we shall know her by her portrait, which is in our house"³⁸. In 1584, it was to portraiture that she turned as a means of self-expression. The object became a self-fashioned subject to tell her own story, bringing the living and the dead together.

Laudomia Gozzadini grew up in a house that contained a number of portraits, which was quite unusual for Bologna of the 1560s, where most inventories of the property of well-to-do families at that point included no more than a few religious pictures. The inventory of

³⁸This note appears in Camillo Gozzadini's *libro di ricordi*, but it is not in Camillo's handwriting. The note states: *22 Marzo 1619. Raccordo come 22 Marzo il Secondo Venerdi di Marzo, a ore circa le 21, la mia cara figliola Placidia Gozzadini, la quale spero sia andata in cielo per la vita esemplare et spirituale che lei faccia di diginare con pane et acqua tre giorni della settimana, che confido nella divina dal Dio sia andata in cielo ove pregara per famiglia nostra in amici et parenti. Sabbiamo per il suo Ritratto quale è in Casa.*" In the property inventory taken after Laudomia's death (see appendix), one sees that Placidia's portrait was not hung in the room with other family portraits, but in one clearly designated for religious pictures and portraits of holy people, including Popes and Cardinals.

the *beni mobili* of Ulisse Gozzadini indicate that he had portraits of himself, his relatives Sebastiano and Fabritio Gozzadini and an unnamed male and female Gozzadini³⁹. Furthermore, he had himself painted as the donor in the "Crucifixion" by Orazio Sammachini for his burial chapel in the church of Santa Maria dei Servi (Fig.31)⁴⁰. Ulisse died when Laudomia was only six and she probably would not have been able to remember him at all, had it not been for his painted presence in their house and parish church.

However, the picture that Laudomia Gozzadini ordered in 1584 was of a much more ambitious nature than anything that had hung in her father's house as she was growing up. Its size and composition demanded careful orchestration and a great deal of dialogue between painter and patron. One can only speculate why Laudomia chose Lavinia. Lavinia was already acquiring a reputation for herself. Borghini, had after all, produced his *Il Riposo* the same year as the Gozzadini picture was painted, describing Lavinia as having produced paintings destined for both "public and private" places, which had been sent to Rome and elsewhere, and which fetched high prices⁴¹. Laudomia would have wanted the best painter available in Bologna. She may also have wanted an artist who was in some ways the heir

³⁹9 April, 1567. *Inventarii dei Beni Mobili d'Ulisse Gozzadini. Istrumenti* 164, No. 26, Archivio Gozzadini. Ulisse's pictures include: "Un ritratto di Ulisse del naturale in un quadro cornisato con coperto di tela verde, Un ritratto di Giovanni Bentivoglio, Un ritratto di Sebastiano Gozzadini, Un ritratto di M. Fabritio (presumably Ulisse's nephew), Un ritratto d'un dei Gozzadini in tela, Un altro ritratto in tela d'una donna Gozzadini".

⁴⁰There is an inscription on the wall beside the Crucifixion painting in Santa Maria dei Servi which reads: *Ulissi Gozadini Patritio et Senatori/ Republica Bene Gesta Domi Forisque Preclaro Viro/Vitae Integritate Probitateque Insigni/Communis Boni Studioso/Ancorum Factori Accerrimo/Vix. Ann. LVI Mens. Tres Die XX/Obit Idibus Novembris MDLXVI*. This inscription may have given Laudomia the idea of placing a similar one on the back of her portrait.

⁴¹Borghini, *Il Riposo* (Florence, 1584), p.568.

to her father's painter, Orazio Sammachini. Lavinia had been sufficiently close to Sammachini for him to have given a glowing endorsement of her to her future father-in-law, Severo Zappi. Lavinia and Laudomia might already have been acquainted and it does seem likely that Lavinia had worked for the Gozzadini before - this portrait was a huge, complex and delicate commission and some kind of rapport must have been established between Lavinia and Laudomia prior to this event for Laudomia to decide to entrust the work to her. There was an Imolese connection. Leonardo Roscelli, the governor of Imola and the godfather to Laudomia's last child, Gian Battista, in 1584, would have been associated with the commission that Lavinia undertook for the chapel of the Palazzo Comunale in Imola that very same year.

Family group paintings were not uncommon in late sixteenth-century Bologna. Bartolomeo Passerotti painted several, although those surviving by his hand depict families lower down the social scale than were the Gozzadini⁴². The example that Laudomia may well have had in mind (one she and Lavinia might have discussed or even looked at together) was a painting which functioned both as religious icon and as a family group portrait. Furthermore, it was one to which Laudomia had easy access, as it hung in the church of San Giacomo Maggiore, not so very far from Laudomia's own home on the Strada Maggiore. The picture in question, by Lorenzo Costa for the Bentivoglio family chapel depicts the Madonna and Child flanked by Giovanni II Bentivoglio and his family and was painted in 1488

⁴²Passerotti's family group portraits include *Portrait of the Perracchini family* (Rome, Colonna Gallery), who were a family of painters with a special interest in botanical art and *Portrait of the Monaldini Brothers* (Hopetoun House) who were a family of singers.

(fig.32)⁴³. This picture maintains a religious and familial hierarchy, with Mary and Jesus at the top, followed by Giovanni and his wife kneeling at a lower level and their eleven children standing at the bottom. The picture, in its size, with its sexual divisions and ordering, employment of hand gestures and display of family wealth is the closest parallel to be found in Bologna to Laudomia's own family portrait.

In Laudomia's picture, Ulisse Gozzadini sits at the centre of the picture, a couple either side of him. It is of course fitting that he should be presented as the control, as the balance on a pair of scales almost, when it was he who was the director and controller of the lives of the four people on either side of him. He firmly grasps his daughter Ginevra's arm to emphasise that they now belong to another world. Ulisse makes an elaborate hand gesture in Laudomia's direction, one which is used as illustration for *invito* in contemporary manuals of rhetoric, inviting the viewer to look at Laudomia⁴⁴. All the other family members are turned somehow in Laudomia's direction. She is in short the narrator. Of the contact that the men make with their wives, Annibale's is the firmer gesture - his hand resting solidly on his dead wife's shoulder - while Camillo's hand falls limply down and barely makes contact with Laudomia's shoulder. Laudomia herself makes no physical contact with any of her relatives. One hand rests on the little dog which implies she will keep faith for the dead, and the other hand is on the arm of her chair.

Part of the womens' finery was their wedding regalia, their bridal clothes. Yet this picture, painted fourteen years after the event itself, is far from a traditional bridal portrait. The depiction of Laudomia and her sisters' dresses would seem instead to serve two different

⁴³See Anna Ottani Cavina, "La cappella Bentivoglio" in *Il Tempio di San Gigaomo Maggiore in Bologna* (Bologna, 1967), pp 117-131.

⁴⁴Bulwer, *Chirologia*, (Carbondale, Illinois, 1974) .

purposes. On one level these clothes function as a reminder of the weddings that brought these four people together, the unions that Ulisse Gozzadini instigated and the creation of Laudomia's predicament.

The expensive clothes and jewels are also a declaration of Laudomia's share in Ulisse Gozzadini's patrimony. They were goods bought out of the 800 gold scudi bequeathed by her father in his will for the weddings of her and her sister. Laudomia's gown is a bright crimson red, almost the colour of blood. This colour serves to underline her vitality, her survival in the face of her sister's death. Not mentioned in Camillo Gozzadini's *Libro di Ricordi* of the wedding goods are the black lace overgowns worn by Laudomia and Ginevra, replicated by Lavinia in a detail which recalls the bands of embossed velvet in the dress worn by Eleonora of Toledo in Bronzino's portrait of her accompanied by her son Giovanni (Florence, Uffizi). This part of the sister's costume is unusual in Bolognese dress, where it was not customary to wear much lace. One can only assume that its inclusion here is to suggest an element of mourning for Ulisse, Ginevra, or for all the dead children. These women are matrons, not brides.

Camillo wears a red cross and carries a sword, attributes which affirm his status as a Knight of the Portuguese Cross. Annibale holds aloft a piece of paper with writing on it. Giovanni Gozzadini, the nineteenth-century family chronicler, interpreted this piece of paper as an acknowledgement of his work, compiling a history of marriages among the Bolognese nobility from 1265-1451⁴⁵. Another interpretation might be that Laudomia may have consciously chosen to contrast his laborious efforts to document the history of hundreds, if not thousands of marriages with her apparently simpler (yet so much more complex) pictorial

⁴⁵G. Gozzadini (*Bologna, 1882-3*), p.8.

account of just two. However, that piece of paper could easily stand for every single document Annibale had ever signed or drawn up concerning Laudomia's life - from the terms of her marriage to Camillo in 1569 through to more recent ones concerning his control of her property. In the Gozzadini archives, there is a huge quantity of documents concerning Laudomia and her brother-in-law, detailing above all the repayment of the usufruct on Laudomia's dowry and matters relating to property negotiations. Certainly there are far more documents between them than there are between Laudomia and her husband.

Fontana scholars have also been intrigued by how Lavinia Fontana painted the five Gozzadinis. A drawing attributed to Fontana resembling the face of Annibale Gozzadini (fig.33) suggests that the two living men were sketched from life, as was undoubtedly the case for the figure of Laudomia⁴⁶. Lavinia probably based Ulisse Gozzadini's appearance on the donor portrait in the Crucifixion altarpiece in his chapel, or else on a portrait of him, recorded in the inventory of his property in the Gozzadini palace taken in 1566. For her depiction of Ginevra, however, the issue is more complicated. As far as can be discerned from a thorough investigation of wills and inventories, there was no picture of Ginevra for Lavinia Fontana to copy. There are no pictures of any description in the inventory of Annibale Gozzadini's property taken in 1608⁴⁷. It would seem that Lavinia had either known what she looked like prior to her death in 1581, and painted her from memory, or else that Laudomia told her what she looked like. In fact, Laudomia would have had to have given

⁴⁶Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.119. The drawing that resembles Annibale is in the *Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe*, Florence Uffizi (inv. 12196F).

⁴⁷Annibale Gozzadini's property inventory, compiled on 12 December, 1608 by his sons Brandelisio and Claudio on Annibale's death is a loose leaf document to be found in *Campioni inventari e note di beni mobili e immobili*, vol. 399, Archivio Gozzadini. The twelve page inventory contains references to furniture, hangings and books, but there are no pictures whatsoever.

Lavinia precise instructions on how to paint Ginevra, because no sixteenth-century portrait painter would risk offending a potentially valuable client by a depiction of this kind. The dead sister is shown, almost literally, warts and all. One of the most noticeable aspects of the portrait is Ginevra Gozzadini's appearance.

Giovanni Gozzadini described Ginevra as "chubby, squat, scowling, quite ugly", and said one could only imagine the disgust felt by Annibale when he met his "*così brutta e così volgare*" fiancée for the first time⁴⁸. This Gozzadini descendant described Laudomia as rounded, but with gracious and pretty features and a face that is both slender and strong, in short a wife to be proud of, to elicit envy⁴⁹. One can also contrast Laudomia's pale skin with her sister's swarthy skin and the appearance of facial hair, an aspect of Ginevra which is perhaps unique in the history of portraiture of the female nobility. The difference between the two women's looks is indeed remarkable and demands further investigation.

Ginevra is dead and the way that she has been depicted by Lavinia and Laudomia is not the kindest way to remember the dead. On one level, one might think that Laudomia might have chosen to have her sister recorded for posterity in as pleasing a manner as possible, so as not to be remembered by their descendants as the fat and ugly one. Scholars of Bologna fall back on the argument that patron and painter are simply modishly reacting to calls from Paleotti for a need for "veresimilitude" in painting, without examining what he meant by this (i.e., truth in scripture) - and that the Gozzadinis in the picture are being

⁴⁸G. Gozzadini (*Bologna*, 1882-3), p.7, describes Ginevra as "*paffuta, tozza, rincagnata, assai brutta*". In the final paragraph of his article, p.16, he states : "*come si può indovinare il ribrezzo che avrà sentito il suo (Camillo's) cognato (Annibale) vedendo la sua fidanzata così brutta e così volgare*".

⁴⁹G. Gozzadini (*Bologna*, 1882-83), p.7, "*..Laudomia, la ordinatrice del quadro, pienotta, ma di tratti gentili, bellina, di figura snella e aitante..*"

represented the way they were in real life. Yet there is nothing in Paleotti to justify the amount of facial hair on Ginevra, so one must ask where does veresimilitude end and ill-will begin? Ginevra, the perfect reproductive object, is shown here as the imperfect visual object.

The *Laude* about Laudomia suggest that her looks were pleasing and she was more than probably the better-looking of the two sisters. In the portrait, she could emphasise this fact by having her sister's plainness exaggerated. Again, this suggests Laudomia's awareness of the power of the portrait. With no visual record left of her sister, it would not take long for those people who had known her to forget whether she had been pretty or plain - and Laudomia could have intended the picture as an "*aide-memoire*" to ensure that their friends and relatives would continue to think of her as the beauty of the two. For those who would never see the sister in person, such as their descendant Giovanni Gozzadini, the issue would be much more clear-cut: Laudomia had been the "*bella*" and Ginevra the "*brutta*". In this way, Laudomia was and in a sense still is, controlling visual memory.

Dogs play a role in this picture, as they do in other portraits of Bolognese noblewomen. The tiny dog on the table is a typical Bolognese lap dog, whose ears have been pierced with jewels, as was the prevailing fashion. This ornamented pampered little dog is a sharp contrast to the shaggy black dog to be seen in the background of the picture. Not only are the dogs unlike in appearance, but in degrees of liberty as well. Laudomia places her hand on her pet dog's back, to caress it perhaps, but she also restrains it, curtails its movement. The black dog seems free to roam where it pleases. Is this a device whereby Laudomia is able to make a commentary on the difference between her personal liberty and those of the men around her? Like the black dog, they are allowed freedom of action while

she, ornamented like her little dog, is restrained by convention⁵⁰. The device of the dog in the back room may have been suggested to Laudomia by Lavinia herself. It is a similar kind of background narrative to the one she uses in her portrait of Carlo Sigonio, in which students can be seen wandering through a room backing onto Sigonio's study.

Laudomia Gozzadini and Lavinia Fontana obviously established some kind of a rapport following the execution of the portrait. In 1587, Laudomia was godmother to Lavinia's son Severo and Lavinia's next daughter was named Laudomia⁵¹. Indeed, one of the bonds between the two women may have been the number of children they had both borne and lost by 1584 - Laudomia six out of eight, Lavinia four out of five⁵². Lavinia undoubtedly worked as a portrait painter for Laudomia again; there are two other pictures of women who look like Laudomia, one signed by Lavinia now in Besançon and another that was sold as part of the Gozzadini inheritance in 1910. In Camillo Gozzadini's family account book, there are a number of payments made to Gian Paolo Zappi. Some of the entries indicate that Laudomia was the purchaser⁵³. In the eighteenth century, Marcello Oretti's survey of paintings contained in Bolognese private houses declares that there are "molti ritratti" by Lavinia Fontana in the Gozzadini household, implying they were too numerous to mention. The number of paintings in the inventory of Laudomia's property following her death in 1622

⁵⁰Dr. Iain Pears suggested this canine symbolism to me.

⁵¹See Gian Paolo Zappi's *Libro di Battismo*, BCI, reproduced Galli (*Imola, 1940*), pp.110-114, Cantaro, (*Milan, 1989*), pp. 304-305.

⁵²By 1584, Lavinia had lost Emilia, two sons she had named Horatio (one born on November 28 1578 and the next on November 4, 1579) and Laura. For recording the loss of a child, see Chapter Six, "Putti, Pictures and Pedagogy".

⁵³*Libro di conto*, vol 340, Archivio Gozzadini. There are entries for April 19th, 1593, when Gian Paolo Zappi was paid 172 lire, 29th May, 1594, when he was paid 96 lire by Laudomia and February 24th, 1597, when he was paid 172 lire.

numbers eighteen portraits of Gozzadini family members, as well as the group portrait⁵⁴. It seems reasonable to assume that among these were more pictures by Lavinia Fontana.

Laudomia then has recorded an installment of her story in her picture (in every sense of the word). But her anxieties were not at an end and she trusted neither Annibale or Camillo (and with good reason). Having turned the group portrait into a personal account she now (1-2 years later), wrote the first of three wills, each an "ego" document in which she has her own voice. Her sister Ginevra's death may have endowed Laudomia with a sense of her own mortality. In March of 1586, not so very long after the portrait was painted, Laudomia had the first of three wills drawn up. She would write another in December of the same year, and one more in October 1589⁵⁵. These documents reveal much about her sense of the past, her fears for the future of her daughters and the value that she attached to the portrait by Lavinia Fontana.

There are some aspects of Laudomia's wills that are very similar to others left by Bolognese women of her time and station. She is described as an "honesta matrona", sound in mind and body, the daughter of Ulisse Gozzadini and the wife of Camillo Gozzadini, living on the Strada Maggiore. She specifies where she wishes to be buried: she leaves money to her confessor for prayers to be said for her soul and a number of bequests to various female servants, who had worked both for her and her father. Yet Laudomia Gozzadini's wills are not merely neat lists of legacies and gifts. As is the case with her family portrait, these

⁵⁴See the appendix for this inventory.

⁵⁵Laudomia's first will^s dated March 26, 1586 and her second will, dated December 13, 1586. Her third will is dated August 19, 1589. They are all registered with the notary Tommas^m Passarotti, the first two in the *Protocollo Primo*, p.163 and p.213 and the third in the *Protocollo Secondo*, p.46. See Tommas^m Passarotti, 6/2, Archivio Notarile, ASB.

documents contribute to one's understanding of Laudomia's personal problems.

Laudomia wished to be entombed in her father's burial chapel in Santa Maria dei Servi, where both Ulisse and Ginevra were already buried. In the provisions that Laudomia makes for the care of her own soul, she leaves money to the Brothers of the Servi church to say prayers for her. She also leaves money to the Brothers for prayers to be said for the soul of her sister, with an extra clause that should they die on the same day of the year, then this money should go to the Sisters of Corpus Domini. This gesture on Laudomia's part gives some indication of the complexity of her feelings for Ginevra. She had her recorded for posterity as the ugly sister, yet, perhaps in a display of magnanimity, she makes provision for her soul (although she does not mention her father's). Perhaps she did not trust her brother-in-law to take care of such matters, just as she clearly did not trust her own husband to take care of her soul after her death.

The greater part of each of the three wills is concerned with the bequeathing of her estate, which would not only include her own dowry, but the money she had been left by Violante Orsi Gozzadini² and Anna Gozzadini. She does state that if she was to have any sons, then they were to be her *eredes universalis*, otherwise, the money will go to her daughters Placidia and Berenice when they reach the age of twenty, as a supplement to their dowries, which, like hers, are of the sum of 3000 libras Bononiensis. In this interim period, Camillo shall be the trustee of her estate, and he may have the usufruct as is due to a husband (it can never be said that Laudomia was an undutiful wife). However, Laudomia makes a number of stipulations. Camillo is not to use her estate, or the wealth intended for the girls' dowries as collateral on any loan, which suggests that Camillo is already a borrower. If either daughter wishes to enter a convent, then she should have all that she would have had if she had remained in the secular world. They must not be pressurised in any way to give up any

of their rights, and can decide only between themselves if they wish one to have more than the other. In particular, they are to yield nothing to Camillo, or to any of "his sons".

Laudomia's very precise choice of language when speaking of her daughters' futures is clarified by her remarks about Camillo and his children. She knew from her own experience that bastard children could be legitimised to obtain a male heir. It was common for legitimate daughters to be coerced into a convent on a extremely reduced dowry in order to make more funds available to the male heir. She was also aware how young girls and women could be manipulated by unscrupulous male relatives not acting in their best interests. She was thus attempting to provide her daughters with the kind of protection that she had never really had, while at the same time allowing them a degree of choice and certainly an equal status between them. In the event, the younger daughter, Placidia did choose to become a nun and her mother attested to her holiness on her death.

Bolognese women tended to write much more personal wills than did their male counterparts. As seen in the previous chapter, they frequently left keepsakes and tokens to their female friends and would also leave pictures to them, usually ones of a religious nature. However, the place that Laudomia's family portrait has in her will and the way in which she speaks of it appears to be quite unprecedented in Bolognese testaments.

In Laudomia's first will, the next item that follows her instructions that Camillo Gozzadini is not to syphon off her daughters' dowries for his own use, or that of his male issue, is a description of that portrait. Translated from the Latin, it reads as a "great and beautiful painting of the father of the testator, the testator herself, her sister and their husbands, by the hand of the excellent painter, Lavinia Fontana". Laudomia leaves the painting to Camillo and then asks that it be handed on to the nearest male relative of the Gozzadini clan - thereby ensuring, that like her father's money, it was going to be kept in the

family⁵⁶. In this first will, Laudomia asks that whoever should have possession of the painting will pray to St. Jerome, to whom she is personally devoted, for the souls of the people in the picture, showing the same kind of magnanimity towards the souls of her male relatives, including her adulterous husband, that she displayed towards that of her sister. This is the last item in her will and it is concluded with the signatures of her witnesses, who include a number of the monks of Santa Maria dei Servi.

Laudomia wrote a second will in the December of the same year, in which the greatest changes to the one in March are the terms in which the picture is described. Its description is placed nearer the beginning of the will and it is itemised as "una icona magna"⁵⁷ or in secular language (and here the will switches from Latin to Italian) "a great and beautiful picture with the image of the testator, the testator herself, her sister, their husbands, by the hand of Lavinia Fontana, the famous painter, honourable in everything⁵⁷. In this will, Laudomia asks for the testator and the other people in the picture to be remembered, rather than prayed for.

Laudomia's last will was written in August of 1589. It was recorded in her bedchamber and she describes herself as being sound in mind but weak in body. Much of it is stripped down. There is now no mention of having prayers said for her sister's soul, just her own. However, her very specific instructions for the fate of her daughters remains, as does the place of the portrait. Again, it is described as a great icon, the identities of the sitters are recorded, as is the name and status of the artist. In this will though, she asks that

⁵⁶"Item unum quadro magnus imaginis patris ipsius testaricis..et eius sororis et maritos..manu eccelentis pictricis M. Lavinie Fontane di legenter ornatu, voluit suoi quadro et icona stare permanente penos Mag. Camillo quod vivet et deinde pene filios et descendentes masculos". Tomàs^h o Passerotti, Protocolo Primo, p.165.

⁵⁷"Un quadro grande e bello con l'immagine del padre della detta (testatrice) et dell'istessa et della sua sorella et delli lori mariti di mano della Signora Lavinia Fontana pictrice celebre et honesta in omne". T. Passarotti, Protocolo Primo, p.214.

it be given to Placidia and Berenice on Camillo's death, and, if they have no heirs then she wishes the "icona" to go to a male Gozzadini. Furthermore, in this will, there are no requests for prayers or remembrances of the subjects in the portrait.

There is much within these three descriptions of that portrait that demands thought. If one was in any doubt of the importance and significance which Laudomia attached to the portrait, then it is certainly dispelled by its place in her testaments. It is highly unusual for an owner of a painting in Bologna during this period to mention the artist's name when bequeathing it to someone else, let alone to describe them as "excellent" or "famous", or to attest to their honour. This acknowledgement of Lavinia on Laudomia's part is indicative of the esteem in which Laudomia held Lavinia and the pride that she took in her commission. Laudomia still includes a mention of Lavinia in her last will, when, clearly convinced she is on her deathbed, she removes all other references and concern for the souls of sister, father, husband and brother-in-law.

Also of interest are the terms in which the portrait is described. In the last two wills, the description deliberately switches from Latin to Italian (her voice is not diminished by the scribe). Furthermore, the word *ritratto* is never used, instead the terms include "picture painted with the image", "people represented in the picture", which suggest that Laudomia did not see the work as a straightforward copying of likenesses. Most striking of all is the use of the word *icona*, which in both Latin and Italian means "icon". If one did not know about the circumstances of Laudomia's life, revealed in part through her own wills, one might imagine that this picture conformed to Paleotti's ideals of the sanctity of the family. Yet these Gozzadinis are no holy family and Laudomia incorporates the word icon into her wills after she has taken out requests for prayers to be said for the souls of her male relatives. Instead, this term can only be connected to Laudomia's conception of what this portrait stands

for. Marriages are made in heaven and God's will be done.

It is tempting to think, that with her precise and elaborate instructions as to the legacy of the portrait, her own property, she is, in some way, self-consciously echoing her own father's equally complex instructions for the bequeathing of his estate. Neither intended their property to pass out of Gozzadini hands. Laudomia wants her husband to keep the portrait in the house and given its size he would have found it difficult to tuck it away in a corner and thus it will be passed on. Laudomia and her relatives will continue to look down on their descendants.

There was no guarantee that should Laudomia die, all her requests would be upheld. Her money was ostensibly safeguarded for her daughters' use, but Camillo, as the guardian of the two girls could still "persuade" them into a convent on a reduced dowry and syphon off some of their riches for his sons. Similarly, as the owner of the portrait, he could have it chopped up for firewood if he so desired. But Laudomia is doing her best to ensure that she has made provision for everything that she holds dear and can only hope that her memory and her wishes will be honoured. As it happened, Laudomia . indeed outlived all the other people in the portrait.

In 1594 Camillo Gozzadini's political ambitions were realised and he was elected Bolognese Ambassador to Rome⁵⁸. He, Laudomia and certainly Berenice (it is not clear if Placidia had entered a convent by then or not) all moved there. Laudomia was clearly lonely. While her home life in Bologna might have left much to be desired, she evidently had a

⁵⁸There are numerous references in Bolognese chronicles to Camillo's election as Bolognese ambassador. See, for example, Valerio Rinieri's *Diario delle cose più notabili seguite della Città di Bologna dall'Ano 1520 al 1613*, Ms 434, B.U.B. In his entries for 1594 he states that on March 12, Ridolfo Isolani (who had been Bolognese Ambassador to the Medici) was elected Ambassador to Rome. However, he refused the appointment, so on April 20, Camillo Gozzadini was elected in his place.

social life, friendships with other women and was able to act as a patron of the arts. In Rome she seems to have been cut off from these activities. In June 1594, a Bolognese noblewoman Laertia Rossi, visiting her daughters in Rome, wrote home to her son Lorenzo Ratta, mentioning that she had been to see the Bolognese Ambassador's family. She describes how warmly Laudomia had received her, saying to her that it felt like having a sister again and told Laertia that she must come visit again before returning to Bologna in terms of familiarity which suggest that Laudomia missed her Bolognese community⁵⁹.

One knows little of Laudomia's activities between 1594 and 1599. Her daughter Berenice was married in Rome in 1597 to her third cousin Fabritio Gozzadini, who was also living in that city⁶⁰. Camillo Gozzadini seems to have spent periods of time away from Rome, as there are letters written by him from Brescia and Ferrara in the course of the 1590s⁶¹. He was away from home when, on Christmas Eve, 1598, the Tiber burst its banks. As many remarked at the time, this flood was the worst that Rome had ever experienced in ancient or modern times and caused death, disease and loss of possessions⁶². For Laudomia

⁵⁹Loose leaf document dated June 28, 1594, in *Lettere Originali d'Uomini Bolognese*, B933, BCB. Laertia states: "*Andai a visitare la Signora Laudomia, la quale sua cortesia me fece chiare il sopra modo offerendosi dare era bona ascuirme gli comondasse e facesse conto d'haver una sorella in quelle bande e molti altre ceremonie - e finalmente che me volevanti si partesse..*"

⁶⁰7 November, 1596 *Dote di Berenice Gozzadini Gozzadini, Istrumenti* 176, Archivio Gozzadini. Berenice received a dowry of 5000 libros Bononiensis. As she was marrying a third cousin, they needed a papal dispensation, which they received on January 20, 1597. *Istrumenti* 176.

⁶¹See the small collection of letters written by Camillo in *Lettere scritte dai Gozzadini* vol 39, Archivio Gozzadini.

⁶²M.P.Pavese et al, "Three Historical data series on floods and anomalous climatic events in Italy" in *Climate since A.D. 1500*, ed. R.S. Bradley and P.D. Jones (London, 1995), p.157.

Gozzadini, the Tiber did not merely let loose fathoms of filthy water, but a lifetime of wrongdoing and injustice as well.

The Bolognese ambassador's household was not exempt from the disaster. Camillo Gozzadini had been away from Rome when it had happened, but came back to Rome to survey the damage to his property. He immediately wrote to his brother-in-law Annibale, describing how their horses, wine, wood and coal had all been swept away⁶³. He said that his family and Laudomia in particular were urgently in need of extra money to replace all their lost goods and he hoped that Annibale would oblige by sending some straight away⁶⁴.

One might recall that Annibale was in charge of the land that had been bought with the money left to Laudomia and Ginevra by their female relatives in 1579 and 1580 and Laudomia was due from him her share of the profits from the rents and agricultural produce. However, evidence suggests that Annibale had never been as regular as he should have been in making payments to her. It would seem that after she moved to Rome, Annibale's payments to Laudomia had all but dried up. Laudomia had had a large dowry and before the flood may not have had the economic need to put pressure on him for her rents. Her husband, as it will be revealed, was clearly reluctant to bring any pressure to bear on his brother-in-law. However, having lost her possessions in the flood - and one must remember that as a noblewoman a certain amount of her capital would be in clothes made from very

⁶³Camillo's letter to Annibale was written on January 24th, 1599. Vol 39, Archivio Gozzadini. Camillo describes how the flood "...m'ha levato tutta la provisione del Fiere Biada per li cavalli, vino, legne, carbone et con mobile di Casa a tal, che il mio Sig. Annibale mi trovo cosi stordito in animo..."

⁶⁴"esser necessitato di far nuova provisione di molte cose, che mi promette a bisognita di V.S. et la congiontione della parentela a pregarla come faccio con ogni vino affeto a voler in questo mio bisogno favormi di qualche soccorso in prestito, ch'io ne saro buon rendito di perpetuo obbligatione saro...Mia moglie la quale certo se ritrova ancor lei in gran bisogna..."

expensive cloth, she was in a very precarious state and clearly had need of extra funds.

Camillo Gozzadini, having made that one request to his brother-in-law to send his wife money, immediately lost interest in her and her problems. In the letter from January, 1599, he then informs Annibale that he is joining a spiritual company in Rome and asks if Annibale would be so kind as to send a design for his family coat-of-arms that was to be found in their house in Bologna⁶⁵. Camillo writes several more times over the next year to Annibale, on one occasion requesting money for a Mantuan "widow" in distressed states (possibly his mistress or a courtesan) - but he makes no more mention of his own wife's needs⁶⁶. If the only documents remaining from this period concerning Laudomia were these letters, one would assume Annibale had fulfilled his obligations to Laudomia. But that was not the case. Laudomia herself paints a very different picture of what she was experiencing.

On March 23, 1599 Laudomia herself wrote to Annibale, having reached desperate straits⁶⁷. She describes herself as "reduced to such terms that I am asking the Vice Legate to plead with you for what is mine on my behalf, seeing that you have never sent it to me in the five years that I have been in Rome"⁶⁸. She explains that she has been so ill that she

⁶⁵ *Non restando dirli che quando una Compagnia Spirituale m'ha ricevuto a darli la sua Arme della Famiglia con il Cimiero, et perchi qua non lo cimiero alcuno sopra l'Arme che io, la prego a mandarmi in disegno il Cimiero, che è in Casa di V.S sopra la fuga della Scala di Strado Stefano, che se ben mi ricordo sia una serbe.."*

⁶⁶ On May 16th, 1600, Camillo writes about Madonna Magdalen, *già moglie di Sebastiano Pertisa*, who had recently arrived in Rome in unspecified distressed circumstances. vol 29, Archivio Gozzadini.

⁶⁷ Laudomia Gozzadini's letters are to be found in *Lettere scritte dai Gozzadini*, vol 43, Archivio Gozzadini. Transcriptions of the two letters cited in this text can be found in Gian Ludovico Masetti Zanini, "Nozze bolognesi, dote e corredo nel tardo Cinquecento Romano" in *Strenna Storica Bolognese*, Anno XXXII, 1982, pp.287-288.

⁶⁸ *..io sono ridotta a questi termini di farli domandare il mio per mezzo di monsignor vice legato perche ne sono stata sforzata dal bisogno et vedendo che tante*

has spent a month and a half in bed. She has lost so many of her clothes and linens and her predicament has been aggravated by many expenses. Despite the fact that Annibale has given some money to her relative, Silvia Orsi Zampieri to give to Laudomia, Laudomia still owes Silvia a great deal of money⁶⁹. Laudomia candidly admits that she cannot depend on the strength of her husband for support⁷⁰. She concludes by asking Annibale to please accede to her requests so that she will not be forced "to do anything that would be against my nature"⁷¹.

Annibale may never have responded directly to Laudomia, but from Laudomia's other letters and other parts of the family correspondence, it is clear that he decided to declare that he had paid her what he owed her, and that she was lying. He instructed his sons to maintain the same position when Laudomia wrote to them begging her nephews to make their father be reasonable. In 1600, she wrote to her nephew Brandeligo, who had apparently written to in "such harsh and bitter terms that I am quite astonished"⁷².

This letter reveals much about Laudomia's comprehension of the injustice of her situation and the lies and contradictions that she has been told. Her brother-in-law and his

volte che gli ho fatto doman dare quel che avanza non e mai stato possibile in cinque anni ch'io sono in Roma di potere havere il mio..."

⁶⁹*"...sappia che del accidenti del fiume oltre che n'ha levato molte vesti e biancaria, di poi mi sono amalata et di già e un mese et mezo che mi trovo nel letto et aggravata da molte spese...li 12 ongari che vostri signoria ha pagati alla signora Silvia non servono per niente stante che sono debita maggiore somma a lei..."*

⁷⁰*"... non potendo le forze di mio marito suplire sono astretta a valermi del mio..."*

⁷¹*"... prego vostra signoria a provederli accio non habbia occasione di far qualche cosa che fusse contro il mio genio"*

⁷²*"Si come non mi par che vostra signoria habbia havuto occasione niuna di usar meco nello scrivere termini cosi aspri e pugenti come ha fatto, cosi sono rimasta infinitamente meravigliata delle protesione che fa professione di havere contra di me..."*

sons while maintaining that they have paid her the sum of 1261 Bolognese lire have also told her that her income from the land had been reduced as it had been doing very badly, which Laudomia does not believe⁷³. Laudomia also makes a very interesting remark about her relationship with her brother-in-law. She writes to her nephew saying that she has not deserved such harsh treatment from his father, whom she has always "professed to love like a daughter"⁷⁴. Annibale was her sister's husband - fourteen years older than Laudomia, but no more, yet Laudomia clearly saw him as someone with such authority over her life that there was no way in which she and he could be equals.

As in the letter written to Annibale, Laudomia warns Brandeligio to behave better in his future proceedings with her, or she will initiate a law-suit⁷⁵. However, Laudomia had one great difficulty in this direction. As a married woman, she could not launch a suit without the consent and backing of her husband and as can be seen from his letters to Annibale, Camillo was not prepared to involve himself in her problems. Camillo's attitude may just have been another part of his lack of interest in his wife's welfare, but it also suggests that he was being very careful not to offend his brother-in-law. Camillo was dependent on office

⁷³*"per allungare il pagamento delle lire 1261.11.6, le quali io dico resolutamente che per essere liquide pretendo mi siano pagate in ogni maniera...Circa poi al ricordo che mi da, che volendo con buona coscienza godere i frutti del mio terr^o debba menar oro buoni li danni patiti per la tempesta, dico che di cio quando era il tempo non mi e stato fatto intendere cosa alcuna che non havrei mancato di fare si conveniva per il dovere non havendo mai presentato se non quello che era giustamente mio..."*

⁷⁴*"..ho fatta sempre professione di amarla come figliuola se bene cosi aspramente provocata, di farne risentimento alcuno..."*

⁷⁵At one point in this letter Laudomia states that she is "*prontissima per dare loro ogni sorta di sodisfattione*". She concludes with the warning "*...la.prego bene per l'avenire a procedere più modestamente, ne di lasciare consigliare a i procuratori che per interesse loro non desiderano di vedere altro che brighe e contrasti fra chi si sia.*"

and influence for his wealth. Annibale had wealth, and therefore influence. He also periodically gave financial assistance to Camillo. Despite Laudomia's apparent readiness to begin proceedings against Annibale at any time, the law-suit only began in 1609, a year after Annibale's death and was between Laudomia and Annibale's sons, Ulisse, Brandeligio and Claudio⁷⁶. This timing suggests that Camillo Gozzadini was only prepared to support his wife's suit after their brother-in-law was dead and buried.

As a woman involved in a civil law suit, Laudomia could not appear in court. Her nephews' lawyer, Ercole Fontana, drew up a series of questions about her family and their financial affairs. Laudomia could answer these questions three ways. "Yes" (the scribe records "*credit*"), "no" (the scribe records "*non credit*"), or she could suspend/withhold judgement (the scribe records "*pendet*"). This series of statements, 124 in all, help to fill in the gaps of what had been going on in Gozzadini financial affairs since the early 1570s. The testimony constitutes Laudomia's third powerful "ego document".

Briefly, the testimony was recorded as follows: The money that Laudomia had not been paid was what was due to her from Anna Gozzadini's estate⁷⁷. Anna, the daughter of Fabritio Gozzadini had been left her father's sole heir and he left money to her that had come from Ulisse Gozzadini's estate. Her parents had died while she was young and Claudio Guidotti and Gian-Francesco Angelleli were her guardians. She was of ill-health, when she made her will, she left Violante Orsi and if she died, Laudomia and Ginevra Gozzadini, the heirs to 2000 gold ducats. The guardians informed Annibale of her decisions. Annibale, with

⁷⁶ 15th October, 1609 *Processo tra Laudomia Gozzadini e fratelli Gozzadini*, *Processi* 263, Archivio Gozzadini.

⁷⁷ Anna Gozzadini, her birth and her inheritance are dealt with in points 37 through 71 of the *processo*.

this prior knowledge of where her money would go, asserted that the money came from the Gozzadini estate of which he was the trustee, so it was therefore his right to take charge of it. However, Annibale's sons in their statements claimed that these guardians had had no knowledge of Anna's intentions and therefore could not have informed Annibale. Laudomia's replies to these is "*non credit*". Annibale, having seized control of this money, rather than dividing it into two, was able to coerce Laudomia into the purchase of land from which he would give her her share of the profits. Annibale's sons acknowledge that Annibale' did buy land that he shared with Laudomia and they declare that the first land that Annibale bought with the money was very good and yielded a high profit. Then, according to his sons, Annibale made a faulty speculation, exchanged this land for something that turned out to be of inferior quality, which is why Laudomia's payments went down⁷⁸. Laudomia replied "*non credit*". Nonetheless, these men insisted, Laudomia did continue to be paid and that at the time there was an account book to prove it and witnesses to say they had seen it (but they clearly could not produce this book in 1609). Again, Laudomia's answer is "*non credit*"⁷⁹.

Laudomia is then asked to respond to the statement that she knows that Annibale Gozzadini was a man of goodness and of god-fearing conscience, in other words the type of man who would not swindle his sister-in-law. "*Non credit*" wrote Laudomia. Her response to the statement that Annibale was and is still held in esteem by all who knew him, is "*pendet*" - she suspended judgement⁸⁰. She finally has to respond to a series of statements regarding payments she received from Annibale Gozzadini between 1579 and 1600. While

⁷⁸Points 72 through 78 of the *processo*

⁷⁹Points 79 through 85 of the *processo*.

⁸⁰Points 85, 86, 87. In points 88-90, Laudomia makes similar comments about Signor Bonesani, Annibale's accountant.

Laudomia agreed that she had received some of these payments, she denies receiving more than 7000 libros Bononiensis in total, over the course of twenty one years⁸¹.

It would appear that there were too many contradictions in the statements prepared by Annibale Gozzadini's sons, too many prejudicial witnesses and conveniently lost items. Laudomia's responses were clear and to the point. She did not overplay her hand by denying payments that she had received and the court evidently found her convincing. She left her opinions of her brother-in-law and his sons on record. In 1614, Camillo Gozzadini wrote a letter to an unnamed correspondent in which he says that the happy success of the victory of "*La causa di Laudomia*" had been confirmed⁸². Camillo, finally taking an interest in Laudomia's affairs after so many years of negligence, drew up an agreement with their nephew Brandeligio for the repayment of Laudomia's money. Laudomia, finally, had her victory over them all.

One swindler, one ambitious adulterer, one anxious patriarch bent on perpetuating his seed and one woman's life. The Gozzadini family portrait, the three wills, the testimony are installments in a family saga recounted in a woman's voice. The problems that Laudomia experienced during the course of her lifetime were not unique to her. There were many other women of her class who were viewed by their male relatives purely in their capacity as

⁸¹Points 90 through to end of document.

⁸²*Scritture dai Gozzadini*, vol 39, Archivio Gozzadini. The copy of Camillo's letter, dated July 2, 1614, seems to be a rough draft for one he would later send, as the name of the recipient is not specified.

reproductive organs, who had to tolerate a husband's infidelity, or acknowledge his illegitimate children, or who were at the mercy of unscrupulous relatives who had power over them financially. Fragments of these womens' lives will surface in boxes of legal documents in family archives, but rarely will one ever see a clear picture of them. And in the case of Laudomia, the picture is the key. Laudomia Gozzadini had access to an artist who could provide her with a vision of her situation. When, fully cognizant of the imperfections of those men seated around her, Laudomia asked Lavinia Fontana to paint for her a group portrait with life-size people sitting in a room, of whom two were women, one *bella*, one *brutta*, she placed her faith in the power of the image to transcend the generations. The debt the patron felt to the painter is attested to by Lavinia's name in Laudomia's will. Together, they produced a "document" whose sheer size alone makes it impossible to ignore. They painted on the back, *fece fare la presente opera*, hoping perhaps that this work would still exist in another "present" and be looked at by other viewers who would ask to know the story of Laudomia Gozzadini and her family portrait.

CHAPTER FIVE LA VITA VEDOVILE; The Art of Widowhood

Amongst Lavinia Fontana's known works the widow figures prominently as both subject and as a commissioner of altarpieces and devotional works. No fewer than six portraits of widows survive that can unquestionably be attributed to her. At least one widow gave her the commission to provide an altarpiece for her chapel and there are other works by Lavinia clearly intended for widows' homes. How can one explain and interpret these aspects of Lavinia's patronage? What can one learn from them about the aristocratic widow's visual and social identity in sixteenth-century Bologna? How does a study of Fontana's widow patrons contribute to a fuller understanding of the widow as patron in sixteenth-century Italy?

The vision of the Bolognese widow as interpreted by Lavinia, as seen in the illustrations, provides the viewer with an image of a dramatically and beautifully dressed woman in black, who projects a feeling of melancholy often combined with a sense of self-control, power and piety. What follows is an analysis of those social and cultural factors in Bologna which informed such an image.

Recently, the figure of the widow as patron of the arts has been given some prominence in articles devoted to the role of widows in the building and refurbishment of churches in sixteenth-century Rome and to that of commissioners of altarpieces commemorating the deeds and ideas of their husbands¹. Extending beyond Italy, Elizabeth

¹Such articles include Carolyn Valone, "The Roman Matron as Patron: Various Views of the Cloister Wall", in Craig Monson, Ed. *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion and the Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Ann Arbor, 1992), pp.49-72, C. Valone, "Women on the Quirinal Hill: Patronage in Rome, 1560-1630", *Art Bulletin*, 1994, LXXVI, . . . 1, pp. 129-146, "Piety and Patronage: Women and the Early Jesuits" in A. Matter, J. Coackley, Eds., *Creative Women in Medieval and Early*

Honig has recently examined the relationship between moralising literature and a portrait of an English Renaissance widow². However, there has as yet been no systematic study of widows as consumers of art and artifacts, no examination of what they might have wanted, or the ideas which influenced their choice of painter and subject matter. Which widows were likely to become patrons and purchasers of works of art? Can one generalise about what it was that they wanted?

The considerable presence of widows in the Fontana *oeuvre* provides scope for approaching some of these issues, especially as it is possible to reconstruct the social experience of many of the particular widows who commissioned the works. This evidence comes from family papers, above all wills and property inventories, as well as from chronicles, poetic eulogies and *laude* dedicated to certain patrician widows. There is, in addition, a mass of predicative literature popular in late sixteenth-century Bologna relative to the widowed state. Such evidence, taken as a whole, enhances the reading of Fontana's portraits of, and paintings for, widows. One can also compare and contrast Fontana's portraits and other works associated with widows with those produced by her male contemporaries.

The widows who commissioned works from Fontana have in common that they were

Modern Italy (Philadelphia, 1994). On individual widows' altarpieces see Catherine King, "The Dowry Farms of Niccolosa Serragli and the Altarpiece of the Assumption of the Virgin in the National Gallery in London (1126) ascribed to Francesco Botticini" in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 50, no. 2, 1987 and Mary Vaccaro, "Documents for Parmigianino's Vision of St. Jerome", *Burlington Magazine*, CXXV, 1993, pp.22-27.

²For the example of a Northern widow, see Elizabeth Honig, "In Memory: Lady Dacre and Pairing by Hans Eworth", in L.Gent and N.Llewellyn eds., *Renaissance Bodies; The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, (London, 1992), pp.60-85

all mature women of considerable wealth who enjoyed considerable financial autonomy³. On widowhood, those women who were not immediately repossessed by their families and unceremoniously renegotiated in marriage within days or weeks of the death of their spouse gained a new control over the wealth they had brought into marriage. If they remained in their husband's families they had a right to the usufruct of their dowry, or they could possibly claim repayment of the sum in full.

The widow who was not reappropriated by her family and was nominated *tutrice et aministatrice* of the issue of the marriage by her husband could manage more than her dowry. She became responsible for the financial direction of variable amounts of wealth left in the estate. The intent of the defunct husband was that his wife should honour his name and respect the financial interests of the issue. Not to leave her in control was perhaps to show that he could not trust her, though, if he had doubts, he could also appoint advisors. Surrounding certain widows, (the mature, the matriarchs) then, there was considerable wealth and with it went responsibility.

What notions of widowhood might have informed Lavinia Fontana's representations? Numerous conduct books were published in Italy which advised widows on the most modest and discreet ways with which to deal with their new found freedom and financial assets and most importantly of all, how to comport themselves. This literature, it is argued, should be

³Isabelle Chabot, *La Dette des Familles; Femmes, lignages et patrimoines à Florence aux XIVe et XVe siècles* (Phd thesis, EUI, Florence, 1995), Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The 'Cruel Mother': Maternity, Widowhood and Dowry in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" (*Chicago*, 1985), pp.117-131, Nino Tamassia, "La vedova" in *La famiglia Italiana nei secoli Decimoquinto e Decimosesto* (Milan, 1910), Giulia Calvi, "Maddalena Nerli and Cosimo Tornabuoni: A Couple's Narrative of Family History in Early Modern Florence", *Renaissance Quarterly*, Summer 1992, V.45, n. 2: pp.312-339, and Giulia Calvi, *Il contratto orale, madre e figli nella Toscana moderna* (Rome/Bari, 1994).

considered as proffering possible versions of widowhood on which artists such as Fontana could draw. The most influential work on female conduct in the sixteenth-century, one that was translated into almost every Western European language, was Juan Luis Vives' *Del Officio del Marito; Institutione de Foemina Christiana*⁴. Its third section was entitled "*Del pianto della vita vedovile*" and as its title suggests, it offered a plan, or guidelines, in accordance with which a widow should live her new life.

The model "good" widow grieves deeply on the death of her husband and will remain quietly grieving throughout the rest of her life. She entertains no thoughts of re-marrying, since, as Vives reminds his reader, from Pliny's time onwards it has been held that the woman who remarried will find she has committed adultery when she reaches the afterlife and encounters both her husbands. She must regard her husband as still living through his spirit and thus behave as if she were still married to him. The widow should be very cautious in her conduct and remember that a woman without a husband is like a horse without a bridle, that is lacking firm direction. She must therefore employ self-control. As the governor of her family, she must be ever conscious that women are often blinded by maternal love and over indulge their children. It may be advisable for her to allow "wise men" to instruct and discipline them. While the widow's life should be dedicated to prayer and contemplation, she should stay away from popular and fashionable churches and instead frequent small quiet chapels to attend Mass. Indeed, she should only leave her house when it is strictly necessary and discourage visitors to her home. The image of widowhood that Vives projects is self-enforced clausura.

⁴ Juan Luis Vivez's work was published in Italy as Giovan Ludovico Vives, *De l'ufficio del marito, de l'instituzione de la femina* (Venice, 1546). The work was translated by Pietro Lauro Modenese and dedicated to Eleonora of Toledo.

Around the second half of the sixteenth-century Vives' *Institutione*... became the model for other Italian tracts on widowhood. Ludovico Dolce's *Dialogo della Institutione delle Donne* (Venice, 1557) is a direct adaptation of Vives' work. Dolce transcribed Vives' instructions into a didactic conversation between Flaminio (the instructor) and Dorothea (the pupil). In Book II, Dorothea asks Flaminio what are the qualities of the *vedova perfetta*. He responds that they include her decision not to bury her husband ostentatiously and not to flaunt her widowhood at the world. She must refuse to remarry and she should consider allowing a male relative to take care of any sons she might have. She must safeguard her reputation and make sure she has good legal advice as many are likely to swindle a defenceless woman. Her primary virtue is her sobriety (meaning her dress). She must think of God a great deal (although limit her visits to confession). She must restrict her contact with the outside world and call upon friends or relatives seldom or not at all.

In *Dialoghi del Matrimonio e Vita Vedovile* (Turin, 1568) Bernardino Trotto declared that widowhood was a preferable state to marriage. He believed it to be so not for any personal liberties a widow might enjoy, but because she was no longer committing the sin of fornication. Therefore, she existed in a lesser state of sin than a woman who was still married.

One should note a significant dichotomy in the treatment of appropriate behaviour for widows in the 1570s, which must also have bearing upon the potential renderings of widowhood available to an artist. This remarkable change is coincident with the recommendations of Bishop Paleotti and the new emphasis on the need for funds and energy to be put into charitable work. Giulio Cabej, in his *Ornamenti della Gentil Donna Vedova* (Venice, 1574), while still stressing the importance of modest behaviour, recognised that on

widowhood, a woman was no longer subject to her husband's will and was made free⁵. He argued against re-marrying because of the problems that could arise from bringing up step-children, and from the fear that a new husband could jeopardise the interests of the children of her first marriage. However, Cabei insisted that widows had more opportunities for greatness than did married women. Drawing on the heroic women found in the Old Testament and promoted in sermons by Jesuits and distinguished preachers, he cited Judith in particular as a widow who saved her country from an invader by her initiative and he extolled Deborah who became the governor of her people and cried shame on the cowardice of the men of Israel.

Almost contemporaneously, the Bishop of Verona, Agostino Valerio, described his *Della vera e perfetta viduita* (Venice, 1577) as a *Libro di ricordi per le vedove*⁶. He included a chapter on *occhi bassi*, in which he urged widows to continue to avert their gaze from the world and conduct themselves most modestly. But, simultaneously, he included a chapter on why widows were very useful to the world. One aspect of their usefulness was the example they could set of an irreproachable life and conduct and the other was the notion of the widow as the perpetrator of good works. In addition Valerio urged that the widow now had the opportunity to develop administrative skills. As heads of households, widows managed estates in the city and the country and acted as community role models.

⁵The subtitle of Cabei's book is *Nella quale ordinatamente si tratta di tutte le cose necessarie allo stato vedovile, che potra farsi d'ogni habito virtuoso e honorato*. Its popularity in Bologna is attested to by the fact that several editions exist in the Biblioteca Comunale.

⁶Agostino Valerio (or Valier) wrote a number of tracts for women including *Istruttione alla donna Christiana* (Venice, 1574), *Istruttione delle Donne maritate* (Venice, 1577) and *Ricordi di Monsignor Agostino Valerio lasciati alle Monache* (Venice, 1575).

If, as a matron, the Bolognese noblewoman maintained a prominent social position within the city, most did not retire on widowhood⁷. Indeed, there is evidence that the most socially significant widows of Bologna formed a distinct and revered group. Margaret of Austria visited Bologna on March 13 1580. The ceremonies surrounding this event are described in Ghiselli's *Memorie Antiche di Bologna*⁸. The Duchess was treated in a manner usual to visiting dignitaries. She was met by Gabriele Paleotti and male and female members of the Boncompagni family, among others, and then watched displays in the Piazza Maggiore. In the evening there was a banquet in her honour. After the guests had finished eating, the Duchess was accompanied to her room, not only by the women who had met her on her arrival, but by other noblewomen, who are described as being *tutte di loro vedove*, including women from the Campeggi family. These widows, in a much viewed public procession, accompanied the Duchess to the gates of the city when she left Bologna the following morning. Certainly these women were not expected to remain secluded in their homes. In fact they were encouraged to contribute to the ritual of a visiting female dignitary.

The *laude* were not confined to descriptions of youthful Bolognese beauties or married society matrons but extended to the widow. In addition to his paeans of praise to Isabella Ruini Angelleli, Costanza Alidosi Isolani and Laudomia Gozzadini, the anonymous writer of the *Poesie in lode di varie Dame Bolognese* dedicated no less than seventeen verses to women whom he specifically identifies as widows⁹. He reveals a fascination with and admiration for these women, defining them as exotic creatures surrounded by mystery and

⁷See Chapter 3, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone".

⁸Ghiselli, *Memorie Antiche di Bologna*, vol XV1, BUB, p.904.

⁹MS 1207, BUB.

even romance. Single but not single, these widows excite the writer. In some of the verses written by this anonymous writer, considerable emphasis is placed on the appearance of the widow. Thus one learns that the radiance of Lavinia Felicini Malvezzi's beauty, valour and name "shines through the inky black"¹⁰. Whoever "craves to see celestial Pallas in dark clothes" should look to Virginia Visconti Bovi¹¹. Marsibilia Malvezzi Bargellini's "lugubrious clothes" cannot conceal her divine beauty¹². The poet praises the mourning habits of Elena Pepoli Volta, who succeeds in remaining close to her husband, despite his death¹³.

Other widows in these *laude*, however, are clearly getting past the stage of deep grieving. From the unhappy mind of Pantasilea Gozzadini Bonfigliolo escapes "a modest joy" and her smiles and laughter can turn "dark night to clear day"¹⁴. Other descriptions verge on the amorous. Laura Bolognini is described as being like a "little drink of sweet milk"¹⁵. Isabella Lupari Ariosti has "a breast of the smoothest alabaster", and can cause a "thousand hearts to burst into flames"¹⁶. To see Ludovica Pepoli Poggi smile is like seeing "jewels set

¹⁰"...Belta, il valore, et il nome vostro/Chiaro col nero inchiostro.."

¹¹"*Chi brama in bruna veste/Veder Palla celesta..*". The Torriano English/Italian dictionary of the seventeenth-century suggests *bruno(a)* can be translated as brown or dark.

¹²"*Non possono lugubri panni vostri/Donna celani tanto/Che no traluca suoi/ La divina belta del nero mato..*"

¹³"*E malgrado di morte/Ne tuoi costumi al più il tuo consorte*"

¹⁴"*Del tuo lugubre mente/Esce in gaudio modesto.../E dalle luti il riso/E gli scherzando intorno/Cangia l'ascuro notte in chiaro giorno*"

¹⁵In the same cast of characters at the back of this volume where Costanza Alidosi is described as "*La Gloria del Mondo*", Laura Bolognini is "*Il coppetino di latte*". In her poem, she is described as being "*di candido latte*".

¹⁶"*Quel Candido alabastro/Di ch'Amor formo l'argente pette.../Haver mill occhi, mille cuori e poi/Arder in mille fiamme e mi car voi*"

in gold¹⁷.

These *laude* make much of the beauty of the widows' appearance in her black clothes, a sentiment somewhat at variance with the recommendations and comments in the prescriptive literature which emphasises the need for sobriety of dress and the suppression of claims to beauty. The *laude*, however, do raise an issue of concern in any discussion of the Italian widow of this period, that is, the relationship between her dress, family status and the socially acknowledged way of commemorating the dead. These issues are fundamental to Lavinia Fontana's representation of the widow in her portrait. If the ability to paint sumptuous clothes made Lavinia's dowry portraits particularly sought after, this talent was also critical to her popularity as a painter of widows.

Widows' mourning dress was a much more complex issue than simply wearing a dress of the right colour and finding a suitable head covering. In Renaissance Italy, the significance of widows' clothes (or *abiti*) was held to be of far-reaching importance. Every conduct book writer was an enthusiastic supporter of mourning garb for widows although each one had his own interpretation of the appropriate form it should take. Vives cautioned widows against extravagant dress, citing Antwerp widows who insisted on wearing purple. Dolce warned widows not to be too extreme in their mourning habits by actually choosing to wear a nun's habit¹⁸. Agostino Valerio included a chapter in his book on why widows should wear black, explaining that it showed that a part of them (i.e their husbands) was

¹⁷"...*Voi sorri grandezze belle/E come gemme in oro*"

¹⁸Dolce (*Venice, 1577*), p.70.

already dead¹⁹. Cabeì felt that every aspect of the widow's life and character could be summed up in her appearance and he called his book Ornaments of the noble woman widow. Dark clothes, Cabeì explain, mirror the widow's disconsolate soul and they indicate her virtue²⁰.

Isabelle Chabot has demonstrated that in fifteenth-century Florence, husbands left very specific instructions in their wills as to how they wished their wives to appear following their deaths²¹. They left their wives financial provision (a "counter-dowry") to acquire sumptuous black mourning clothes which they should wear in the funeral cortege and afterwards. Like the wedding dress on the wedding day, the widow's *abiti* at the funeral were perceived as constituting a public statement of the solidity and success of the partnership. Florentine widows considered their costume a significant part of their mourning ritual and at least one widow became distressed when events deterred her from dressing in her mourning habit²². Like a woman's wedding dress, the widow's mourning clothes in these instances did not actually belong to her (or only did so while she remained unmarried) but were a part of her dead husband's estate. If she remarried, she was obliged to relinquish them to her husband's family.

Although a number of Bolognese noblemen leave instructions in their wills regarding

¹⁹Valerio (*Venice, 1574*), Chapter 31, "Perché le vedove portano l'habito negro": "*Portono le vedove gli abiti negri (e in alcuni luoghi il velo), dimostrando che sono meze morto al mondo.*"

²⁰Cabeì (*Venice, 1574*), Chapter 5 "Delle Vesti convenienti alla vedova".

²¹Isabelle Chabot, "La Sposa in nero". La ritualizzazione del lutto delle vedove fiorentine (secoli XIV-XV)", *Quaderni Storici* 86 (1994), pp.421-462., adapted from her Phd thesis (*Florence, 1995*).

²²Christiane Klapisch-Zuber "The Cruel Mother" (*Chicago, 1985*), p.120.

provision for their wives after their deaths, it is very rare for them to mention their widows' clothes. Nonetheless, mourning costume for widows was a significant issue in Bologna. Carlo Poni has demonstrated that by the end of the seventeenth-century, Bologna was the major European producer of black silk crepe for widows' clothes²³. Furthermore, whatever the attitude of husbands to their wives' funeral apparel, Bolognese widows themselves were committed to fitting clothes and attached a great amount of importance to them. If their husbands did not leave provision for their wives to attire themselves in mourning clothes, then widows bought them for themselves and as such, they were a part of a widow's personal property.

In some cases, widows actually transformed their mourning clothes into legacies, perhaps in order that their original wearer and this stage of her lifecycle would be remembered, as did Giulia Zambecari Bianchini. In her will of 1559 she bequeathed some of her mourning clothes to her cousin, Hippolita della Fava di Monte²⁴. She asked that Hippolita would take whatever two of her *veste viduali* that she liked the best²⁵. Giulia clearly meant her cousin to select clothes made of luxurious fabrics, as she instructs her mother and sisters to give her black woolen clothes to the four women to whom she had given dowries, two of whom were now shoemakers' wives and one of whom was married to

²³Carlo Poni, paper on the Italian textile industry given at European University Institute, Florence, as part of a conference on consumption, April, 1994.

²⁴Testamento della Giulia Zambecari Bianchini, 20 May, 1559. Archivio de Buoi, Fondo Zambecari (busta unica) no 29, ASB.

²⁵cfr *ut supra*: "Poi lascio alla mia Car(ma) et hon Cugina Mad(a) Hippolita della Fava di Monte Due delle mie Veste Viduali pigliate a sua eletta et se lei no le volesse pigliare la prego a darle le megliie che li seranno et se lei no le vuole per lei dispensile pero in opere pie a sua satisfattione et gl'i raccomando l'anima mia."

her cousin Hippolita's coachman²⁶.

Similarly, in her will dated January 25th, 1603, Diana Mantovani Aldegatti left what she described as her "*honoreval vestito*" to Caterina Borzani Dossi, who had been a widow since 1581²⁷. Although Diana does not describe the dress as *viduali*, the word honourable implies the dress's significance and what other kind of dress would one widow leave to another, but a mourning habit? This same Caterina may have been painted by Lavinia as she was the godmother to Lavinia's first child, Severo, in 1578 and there is a record that she lent Lavinia and Gian Paolo a pearl necklace, ostensibly for the purpose of painting her portrait.

The property inventory of Catherina Avengharia, the widow of Lelio Bianchini, from 1591, gives a description of what kinds of clothes a noble Bolognese widow wore. Catherina possessed a dress of black sarcenet taffeta, one of black worked velvet, a tabby dress, a doublet (or over-bodice) of black sarcenet taffeta, one of black gros-grain silk, a belt of pearls and gold, a black belt, two tabby "berette", a hat of black sarcenet, two made of black felt, a black cloth cloak with black velvet flounces²⁸. Such a wardrobe is as sumptuous as any

²⁶For citation, *ut supra*: "*Anchora voglio che le mei vesti di lana negre cioè viduali sono partite dalla mia Car. ma Madre et Sorelle fra le mei quattro donne da me maritate et prima, Margarita de Fiorini moglie de Nicolo Calzolaro da Mote Ombraro; Lucia de Sabbadino moglie di'Anotonio Ligador da balle alla gabella..Maria dalla Giesia moglie di Giovanni de Tunini al presente Cocchiere della Mag(ca) Madonna Hippolita mia cognata..*"

²⁷Testamento della Diana Aldegatti, Vedova Cuppini, 15 January, 1603: "*Item; lascia a Magistra Catherina Borsanina il mio honoreval vestito che al tempo della morte sua, essa signora testatrice si ritrova havere a'elletione de Magistra Catherina*" Parocchia sopressa di San Biagio, Libro 2 No 42, Archivio Archivescovile di Bologna.

²⁸Inventario dei beni di Catherina Avengharia, vedova d'uno Lelio di Binachini, 12 July, 1591. Archivio Ringhieri, *Istrumenti* 1586-1591, ASB. The list of Catherina's clothes reads as follows: "*Un abbito d'ormesino negro, Un Abbito di veluto a opera negro, un abbito di tabbi, un gippo d'ormesino negro, una cintura con perle et oro,*

prepared for a bride in Bologna, and was as costly. It is not surprising that Bolognese widows clearly took both pleasure and pride in their costumes.

Mourning clothes may have gained in sumptuousness by the late sixteenth-century, especially for the younger, still physically attractive widow. There are instances of aged Bolognese widows painted wearing simple, almost nun-like habits, as is evinced by two portraits attributed to Prospero Fontana and four to the Bartolomeo Passerotti school, dateable to the 1560s and 1570s (fig.34)²⁹. These widows are certainly not the exotic creatures described in the *laude*. Nor would they wish to be. They are women marking widowhood as the time of grief, in accordance with the state ascribed to them by Agostino Valerio as "half dead", waiting to join their husbands. Some of them are toothless, they each sit with expressions of patient resignation, either holding a prayer book, rosary beads, or with their hands crossed in their laps.

Of all the artists who undertook widows' portraits, Lavinia Fontana provided a specialist service in the careful depiction of dress. She presents a vision of the Bolognese widow fully consonant with that found in the chronicles, *laude* and family histories, one of a woman dressed in exquisite clothes, who in this respect, ignores much of the advice given to her by the writers of conduct books. These were wealthy widows who, as seen above, were guardians of the heir and managers of property, concerned to project themselves for posterity in this particular role, standing as the head of their houses. Their dress is elaborate and detailed. Moreover, Lavinia pays close attention to their features, in marked contrast to

una altra negra, due berette di tabbi, due capelli di felto negro, una valdrappa di pano negro con balze di veluto negro, una copertina di velluto negro, un fornimento di veluto negro."

²⁹The two paintings attributed to Prospero Fontana were sold at Sotheby's on 8/7/64 and 14/2/68.

the portraits of widows by Ludovico Carracci.

Ludovico Carracci apparently painted a number of Bolognese widows and two surviving widows portraits have been attributed to him ³⁰Although Carracci has not detailed her costume very exactly, the widow in the Dayton Art Institute is wearing a glossy black dress (fig.35). The other widow in the Walpole Gallery is dressed in a much plainer gown made of a dull black material. Costume and material possession are not the main issues in these portraits. These pictures are testaments to mourning and a (perhaps) new found spirituality. Each woman has the same accessories, a Crucifix, a prayer book and rosary beads. The Dayton widow looks to her crucifix, her book and beads before her. The Walpole widow averts her gaze from that of the viewer, and she looks down as if in contemplation, holding her prayer book, her beads strung over her wrist, her crucifix on the table next to her.

Carracci's paintings are a monument to widowhood rather than a close detailed description of any individual widow.

Lavinia could spend more time with a widow, sketching her, getting to know her personality, than would have been proper for a male painter to do. She, in contrast to Prospero Fontana, Passerotti, or Ludovico Carracci could produce a picture that was more than a version of widowhood, but instead an image of a real woman. The six portraits of widows unquestionably attributable to Lavinia Fontana all seem to date between the middle of the 1590s and the first years of the seventeenth-century. Until now, none of these women have actually been identified by other scholars as being widows, despite the fact that in

³⁰A detailed compositional analysis of the two portraits mentioned below is to be found in *Ludovico Carracci* ex. cat, A. Emiliani ed (Bologna 1993), p.24, 25, 54, 55. Feigenbaum lists other lost portraits of widows by Ludovico in the appendix of her dissertation, *Lodovico Carracci; A Study of His Later Work and a Catalogue of his Paintings* (Princeton/Ann Arbor, microfilm 1984).

sixteenth-century Bologna, black was a colour specifically reserved for wear by widows alone³¹.

The widow's portrait in the Casa di Risparmio in Bologna is quite small in size (66 x 52 cms) and allows the woman to dominate the picture's space (fig.36). She is a woman of around fifty; represented half-length, her head and hands almost reaching the painting's top and bottom edges. Her black dress is slit to reveal a brown underdress; the black is set off by a white collar and cuffs of worked lace, a long veil, apparently made of transparent damask, covers most of her hair, framing her face. Her jewelry is seemingly simple, but costly consisting of white seed pearls strung in three rows, fastened together intermittently with large black pearls. The red satin curtain, flung against a dark background adds to the dramatic effect of her presentation.

This widow's face demands attention. The viewer is drawn to her face by an inner light source which illuminates it. She has a strong face, with carefully moulded features, upon which time has made its mark. She has dark circles under her eyes and lines around her nose and mouth. Her gaze is direct and penetrating. It is a shrewd face and an intelligent one, the face of someone who would have little difficulty administering estates. This widow gives the impression of being one whom Agostino Valerio could admire, in spite of her rejection of *occhi bassi*, for she exudes competence, whilst reminding the viewer that she remains true to her husband's memory. Her black habit and her reddened eyes attest to her grief. Her hands are folded in front of her. This gesture, when it is depicted in gesture

³¹This statement can be confirmed by a remark made by Mutio Manfredi who in his *Della Eccellenza della Donna* (Bologna, 1575), p.9 when describing a particular woman, says she was "*vestita di nero, con un velo segno secondo l'uso in Bologna di vedovanza*".

manuals is meant to indicate "*tristi(sta) in animo mio*" - "sadness remains in my soul"³².

One widow whose portrait by Lavinia Fontana succeeds in combining marital piety with her new found autonomy, is that of a woman who can now almost certainly be identified as Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani. The "Portrait of the Lady with a Lap Dog" in the Walters Gallery, Baltimore came from the Hercolani family collection and has been held by twentieth-century scholars to be a member of that family (fig.37)³³. However, a closer identification is posited here. In his guidebook to paintings in Bolognese palaces of 1816, Petronio Bassani listed a half length figure with a dog by Lavinia Fontana as being a portrait of Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani³⁴. He identified no other portraits of Hercolani family members in the palazzo, so it seems unlikely that the identity of Ginevra was purely arbitrary. Bassani had some particular knowledge of who she was.

The details of the portrait Fontana painted of her will presently be discussed. She was yet another distinguished Bolognese *matrone*, the daughter of Senator Ercole Aldrovandi and the wife of Senator Ercole Hercolani. A poem dedicated to her in the late 1580s anonymous collection of *laude* describes "her loving face" (as) so alive and so sweet" and how worthy she is as a wife³⁵.

³²See the hand illustrations in John Bulwer, *Chirolgia (1648-1654, Carbondale, Illinois, 1974)*

³³For the provenance of this painting, see R. Galli (*Imola 1940*), p.66, note 3 and F. Zeri *Italian Painters in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore, 1976), pp.384-385.

³⁴Petronio Bassani, *Guida agli Amatori delle Belle Arti, Architettura, Pittura e Scultura per la Città di Bologna* (Bologna, 1816), p.205. ("*di rincontro evi il Palazzo Ercolani): Nella Prima Parete...Ritratto di Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani (mezza figura)., con cane, di Lavinia Fontana.*"

³⁵BUB Ms. 1207. Ginevra's *Laude* runs as follows:

"*La tua faccia amorosa/che si viva e si dolce/Dal uxor gl'affarini molte/Mentre la lingua posa/Ragiona in guisa tale/Gratia piu de beltrade in amor vale*"

Ginevra and Ercole had several children, including Agostino and Germanico. Francesco Galliani recorded Ercole Hercolani's death as taking place on September 15, 1594, at the age of forty seven³⁶. Ginevra was about ten years younger than her husband. While there is no accessible family archive for this branch of the Hercolani family, a 55 page eighteenth-century copy of a document dated 1594, reveals much about Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani's position as a widow³⁷. The document pertains to the administration of Ercole Hercolani's huge family estate. Ercole's heir is his young son Germanico, but the document makes it very clear that it is Ginevra who is her son's guardian and the administrator of his property, worth, even in the sixteenth-century in the millions of lire³⁸. Ginevra, described as "*Junipera, olim uxor et vidua*" of Ercole Hercolani, the "*tutelam, Regimen, Guberniam et Administrationem*" of the Hercolani estate was already involved in negotiating a land deal worth 2594 scudi with Antonio Bianchini Paselli. Ginevra also appears in original Malvezzi family account books for 1596, where she is cited as making payments of 100 scudi (although for what exactly is not specified) on behalf of her son, Germanico and the heirs of Count Ercole Hercolani, and is described as "*Sign. Ginevra, soi madre et tutrice*"³⁹.

The picture's dating proffers further indication that the woman in the Baltimore portrait is Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani. Scholars have agreed that the picture was likely to have

³⁶Francesco M. Galliani, *Cronica o Diario di Francesco Galliani*, BCB B3556, records Ercole Hercolani's death as taking place in 1593.

³⁷Archivio Bianchini-Paselli, Fondo Montanari-Bianchini, *Istrumenti* 233, no.166, ASB. The copy is dated 12 November, 1705, stating the original is from 22 December, 1594.

³⁸The second half of this document inventories the property of Agostino Hercolani, Ercole's father, who died not very long before his son. Agostino owned vast amounts of farm land throughout Emilia Romagna.

³⁹Archivio Malvezzi Lupari, vol 263, ASB.

been painted in the second half of the 1590s, which would be coincident with the time Ginevra was widowed⁴⁰. It is highly probable that Ginevra and Lavinia Fontana knew each other. Agostino Hercolani was, after all, both Ginevra's father-in-law and Lavinia's godfather. A late eighteenth-century inventory of the (by then) famous Hercolani picture collection lists no less than twelve portraits by Lavinia Fontana. Included among them is one painting whose description matches the one now in Baltimore of a woman caressing a dog on a table, as well as two other portraits that would appear to be of women dressed in mourning⁴¹.

Given Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani's new found position of power in widowhood, it is hardly surprising that she would have wanted a portrait of herself to mark, commemorate and record for posterity this responsibility-laden part of her life. Ginevra is visual proof of the sort of dramatic allure that the widow dressed in black could project and which at least one *laude* writer found so intriguing. Certainly, her mourning regalia is of the most sumptuous sort. She wears a black, cloak-like overdress, its high collar enhanced by a gold trim. Beneath it is a bodice made of dark brown and black banded brocade, and a dark brown velvet skirt. These sombre clothes are set off by her white lace ruff, cuffs and her string of pearls. A veil of transparent black gauze is trimmed with gold and white teardrop shaped pearls. Similar jewels hang from her ears and over the exact centre of her forehead

⁴⁰Zeri (*Baltimore*, 1976), pp.384-5. See also Fortunati-Pietrantonio in the entry for this painting in *The Age of Correggio and the Carracci*, ex. cat (Cambridge, 1987), p.134, Cantaro (*Milan*, 1989), p.182.

⁴¹*Descrizione di molti Quadri del Principe Filippo Hercolani, Marchese del Floreiment, pubblicate in Occasione delle sue Nozze con la Signora Corona Cavriani*, B 384, BCB. The reference to the portrait by Lavinia Fontana which would appear to be the portrait now in Baltimore reads "(una) altra (donna) accarezzante un cane sopra tavolino". The other two by Lavinia which may also be portraits of widows are described as "(Una) altra (donna) vestita a bruno" and "(Una) donna con velo nero in capo". More paintings ascribed to Lavinia from this list are transcribed in the appendix.

a single, black teardrop shaped pearl is suspended to dramatic effect.

Further allusions to Ginevra's mourning are provided by her handkerchief, an indication perhaps of the tears that she has wiped away. The hand which holds the handkerchief droops down, in a gesture which according to Bulwer can be used in rhetoric manuals to signify despair. She holds the paw of her little dog with her other hand, linking herself with it. Vives said that widows should think of themselves as dogs who stay true to the memory of their masters and refuse ever to love another.

Ginevra exhibits all the decorum of mourning, yet she is also concerned to project power, which is encapsulated in her rigid and unyielding bearing and in her face. It is an arresting face; she has a beautifully moulded mouth and nose and a firm chin. Her high cheekbones have been accentuated by strokes of red. Like the widow who is about fifteen years older than she in the Casa di Risparmio portrait, her gaze is shrewd and appraising. Her eyes seem to be narrowed as if she were scrutinizing the viewer as closely as the viewer might be scrutinizing her. Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani does not look like the kind of woman who would heed, or would even need to heed Ludovico Dolce's advice. She is perfectly capable of any business transaction.

Another widow who acknowledges her duties as a *madre e tutrice* in a portrait securely attributable to Lavinia Fontana is the one in the "Portrait of a widow and her daughter" (Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale, fig.38)⁴². This woman's identity is at present unknown, but she is clearly a widow, since she and her child are dressed in heavy black clothes, with strings of black coral necklaces. The dark clothing is emphasised, as in the other two portraits described above by Lavinia, by white ruffs and cuffs, the red bow in the

⁴²See Fortunati Pietrantonio (*Bologna, 1986*), II, pp. 732, 767 and Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.179.

child's hair and around her necklace and red binding of the book and by the rich crimson cloth backdrop. This woman may have been from the Zambeccari family, since the work came from the Zambeccari collection ⁴³.

The little girl meets the viewer's gaze with a wide-eyed melancholia; her mother's gaze, if not as shrewd and appraising as that of the older widow in the Casa di Risparmio portrait or Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani, is no less intelligent and resolute. Her mother is quite young, perhaps in her early thirties and would certainly have been admired by the writers of good conduct books for the decision not to remarry. The portrait is a conscious expression of her status as guardian of her child and the relationship between mother and daughter is the main theme of the portrait. They stand close together and the widowed mother places a protective arm around the girl. They hold what is probably a small prayer book between them, a gesture which unites them both physically and spiritually. The book could stand as a symbol of prayers the two will say for a dead husband and father. It also alludes to her role as *tutrice*; this widow is now responsible for her daughter's education and spiritual welfare (which she evidently has chosen not to hand over to the "wise men" recommended by Vives and Dolce). The grouping of the pair is also reminiscent of paintings of St. Anne teaching the Virgin to read⁴⁴. This widowed mother is doubtless aware of such an allusion, as well as the fact that St. Anne was proffered as a role model for widows by

⁴³Given the emphasis placed on the status of widowhood for Zambeccari widows by Giulia Zambeccari Bianchini, it would be appropriate if this woman and her daughter were indeed from that family.

⁴⁴In Bologna, the widowed state of St. Anne was clearly acknowledged. Giovanni Niccoli Pasquali Alidosi in *Istruzione delle Cose Notabile della Città di Bologna* (Bologna, 1614), p.39, describes July 26th as the feast day of "S. Anna, vedova, madre della Beatis.. Maria Vergine". See the following chapter for further analysis of the relationship between painting in Bologna and the education of children.

writers such as Agostino Valerio.

There are two widows in portraits attributed to Lavinia Fontana who seem especially melancholic. One is a portrait on which the name Flaminia Gozzadini Caccianemici is inscribed, which was probably painted by Lavinia Fontana in her very last years in Bologna (private coll., fig.39)⁴⁵. Flaminia was twice married to short-lived husbands. Her brother Gabbion Gozzadini (the father of the Flaminio who was married to Laudomia Gozzadini's daughter Berenice) arranged a marriage for her with one Tommaso Machiavelli, whom she married on March 10 1587⁴⁶. Tommaso died in August of that same year. Gabbion was clearly anxious for his still youthful sister to remarry again as soon as possible, as by March 23 1588, Flaminia was married again, this time to Alberto Caccianemici, who came from a Roman branch of a Bolognese family. Gabbion also mentioned that, judging by the picture Alberto had sent him, he was a virtuous man and that he was glad Flaminia and Tommaso Machiavelli had not had any children. Alberto Caccianemici was dead by 1602, as Flaminia is recorded as living once more in the Gozzadini family household.

Flaminia's picture shows a rather heavy set woman dressed in black seated in a chair. She wears a much more elaborate veil than the women in the previous portraits, which may well be a new seventeenth-century fashion. Her expression appears to be one of reflective melancholy, and she hugs her little dog to her. Flaminia, in this picture, gives the impression of a woman saddened by life, one who misses the company of her husband more than she

⁴⁵Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.206 cites the sources for this painting. It was exhibited at "*Il Ritratto Italiano*" in Florence in 1911. In a note from an exhibition review, "La Scuola Bolognese alla Mostra del Ritratto Italiano", *L'Arte*, 1911, p. 215, Matteo Marangoni states that the Conti di Schio (who then owned the Gozzadini family portrait, as well as the portrait of Flaminia) possessed a miniature of Flaminia's portrait which had Lavinia Fontana's name inscribed upon it.

⁴⁶Gabbion Gozzadini, *Libri di Ricordi*, Archivio Gozzadini, vol 1. BCB.

relishes any new found autonomy.

A portrait attributed to Lavinia Fontana of an unknown widow reveals a more physically exotic personage than Flaminia Gozzadini (whose whereabouts unknown, fig.40)⁴⁷. Here is the kind of widow who would inspire poetry in her honour. Again, judging by her clothes, this picture probably dates from the earliest years of the seventeenth-century. A beauty, who recognised that widowhood and mourning clothes could only heighten the drama of her looks, she wears an enormous veil which makes a cloud around her face. The peak falls on the exact centre of her forehead, giving an emphasis to the perfect symmetry of her face. The extreme melancholy of her expression and the mournful way in which her eyes meet the viewer's arouse sympathy even in the least susceptible.

The portrait which raises the most questions and issues surrounding the role of a widow's matriarchal status is that of the "Widow and her Family" (Brera Museum, Milan, fig.41)⁴⁸. Unfortunately the identity of the family is still unknown and there are no clues as to the provenance of the work. It is of keen interest, because it raises the issue of *arzore*, a word used in Emilia Romagna to denote a consciousness of a maternal genealogy and which in more modern times has been the subject of a study by Luisa Passerini⁴⁹. The picture depicts three generations of a family, which is composed of an elderly man and woman, two young men and a young woman and a boy and a girl standing around a table. It would seem

⁴⁷This picture is known to me only through a black and white illustration in the 1969 edition of *Felsina Pittrice*.

⁴⁸See Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.196 and Fortunati-Pietrantonio, Ed. (*Bologna/Milan, 1994*), pp.193-4.

⁴⁹Luisa Passerini, drawing on oral interviews, identified this trait among Emilian Romagnan peasant women, which they describe in Emilian Romagnan dialect as *arzore*. Luisa Passerini, *Storie di donne e femministe* (Turin, 1991)p. 107.

that the old man and the old woman are husband and wife for they are of the same age. She, however, is dressed in mourning clothes and he has his hand placed deliberately on a black dog, a much more ominous-looking animal than the delicate *cane Bolognese*. According to European tradition, the dog could see the spirits of the departed while humans could not, and the animal's presence and behaviour could reflect the state of the soul of the departed⁵⁰. One must therefore conclude, that the old man is dead and, as in the Gozzadini portrait, once more living and dead have been brought together. The old woman is in widow's dress. Other indications that there has been mortality in this family are the heavenward gesture the young woman makes and that the little girl, (like the widow and her daughter in the portrait in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna), hold an open prayer book, suggesting both that prayers are being said for the dead and that the older woman, like Saint Anne, is in control of the younger child's spiritual welfare.

There are other generational family narrative portraits which include widows from this period in Bologna, in particular one by Bartolomeo Passerotti, which features a widow, her grown son and his son (Vienna, Kunshistorisches Museum, fig.42)⁵¹. The compositional division between the sexes in Fontana's portrait are striking and several narrative strategies derive from this divide. All of the male members of the family are on the left hand side of the picture, while the three female members are grouped on the right. The female group are bonded more tightly than the male group. Compositionally they form a generational trinity with the little girl at the forefront.

⁵⁰ Both the *Dictionary of Mythology and Superstition* (London, 1929) and the *Dictionnaire de la fable* (Paris, 1878) attribute to dogs a special relationship with the dead.

⁵¹See Ghirardi (*Bologna, 1990*), pp.258-260.

Together, the three women speak of responsibility, inheritance and destiny. While the male relatives are dressed plainly in varying shades of black and brown, the women's clothes allow them to appear as the three ages of woman; the widow, coming towards the end of her life, wears black; the younger woman wears the green of fertility; the little girl wears white, a sign of purity and innocence. Of particular interest is the relationship between the little girl and her grandmother. The old lady places her hand on the little girl's shoulder. They are the only family members in this picture to make any kind of direct contact and they face in the same direction and focus their gaze on the same distant object. They are the oldest surviving and the youngest family members. The old woman, through her protective touch on her granddaughter's shoulder endorses female family continuity. Furthermore, though this widow dutifully acknowledges her husband's presence from beyond his grave, there is little doubt that she is the matriarch of this family. Perhaps, as with many Bolognese families, the sons were engaged on business elsewhere and she was left to control family interests in the city.

It is fairly certain that it is she who would have commissioned this family portrait, since it is unlikely that had a male member of the family been responsible for the commission, he would have instructed Lavinia Fontana to place so much emphasis on the concept of female dynasty.

Fontana's portraits encapsulate the multi-faceted lives of the widows of the Bolognese patriciate. They are pictures of real women, negotiating new circumstances. Such portraits hung in the family palazzo. They were private images, seen by family and friends. They do not however, represent the full extent of the Bolognese widows' interest in art. Some of these widows wanted public visual recognition. For example, a portrait of Pazienza Barbieri, the widow co-founder of the Casa del Soccorso di San Paolo, hung on the walls of the institution, in the same way that the group portraits of Hals' Regentesses hung in the Old Peoples' Homes

they governed⁵². Alternatively, by commissioning an altarpiece in a family chapel in a church and incorporating a picture of herself as a donor, a widow could secure a public image of herself for posterity.

There are at least half a dozen altarpieces remaining from late sixteenth-century Bologna in which their widow patrons are represented as donors. Among these, three are from chapels in San Giacomo Maggiore, the church on which a number of members of the Bolognese nobility focused their patronage interests in the late sixteenth-century. Cavazzoni referred to two of the chapels as belonging specifically to widows⁵³. On September 19, 1564, Giulia Brigola was given the chapel in S. Giacomo Maggiore which was to be dedicated to Sts. Anthony Abbot and Stephen⁵⁴. She commissioned Bartolomeo Passerotti to paint "The Madonna and Child with Sts. John the Baptist, Anthony Abbot, Nicholas, Augustine and Stephen" in her chapel (fig.43)⁵⁵. The painting is in fact Passerotti's first documentable work. Giulia had herself included in the altarpiece in a traditional donor pose, kneeling behind St. Anthony Abbot. She is a woman of around sixty, dressed in a plain black widow's habit with her hair covered by a white veil. Kneeling on the opposite side of the painting, behind St. Stephen is a man who is fifteen to twenty years younger than she is, who most likely is her husband depicted at the age he was at the time of his death. Giulia Brigola therefore

⁵²Ghiselli, in his record of Paziienza Barbieri's death in 1590 states that one can see her portrait "*alla Casa delle Donne penitite*" vol XVII, p.846 MS 770, BUB.

⁵³Cavazzoni in his record of the paintings in San Giacomo makes reference to the *Cappella della Vedova Cantarij* and the *Cappella della Vedova Bianchetti*. See below for further details of their chapels.

⁵⁴Cherubino Ghiradacci, *Libro economico antico, Sec XVI*, Demaniale, S. Giacomo, ms 122/1728, ASB.

⁵⁵For further information on Passerotti's picture, see Angela Ghirardi, *Bartolomeo Passerotti* (Rimini, 1990), p.147.

acknowledges her husband's continuing presence in her life in the manner of which Vives approved. The difference in age between man and wife is an indication of how long Giulia has been a widow. Having herself depicted in the altarpiece in this way is a demonstration of her commitment to widowhood. Independent for at least fifteen years, with age has come autonomous power for her. She can now use that power to act as a patron of the arts, making her own decisions about how her altarpiece should be painted.

The altarpiece by Ercole Procaccini in the chapel belonging to Elisabetta Cantarij, a woman, described by Cavazzoni as the "Vedova Cantarij" is documented in 1573 (fig.44)⁵⁶. It depicts the "Conversion of Saul". Procaccini must surely have seen Parmigianino's painting of 1530 of the same subject matter (Vienna, Gemäldegalerie) as the dramatically posed horses, saddled with exotic animal pelts are very alike in both pictures. In the painting's right hand corner, the Cantarij widow, a woman in her forties, and her dead husband are depicted at bust length. Elisabetta, wearing the pointed "widow's peak" veil, does not subscribe to the practise of downcast eyes. It is she who looks to the viewer to bring them into the painting, while it is her husband's gaze which is turned away from the viewer as he prays in Paul's direction. The widow may have chosen a scene from the life of Paul for her altarpiece in order to allow herself to take on the role of visual controller and guide within this picture. Paul in his letters to the Corinthians and Timothy gave advice on the proper behaviour for widows, instructions which were quoted liberally by Vives. Paul instructed widows to remain faithful to their husband's memory and devote the rest of their lives to God. Presenting herself in the company of Saul at the moment in which he turned to Christ and became Paul, the Cantarij widow serves to remind the viewer of Paul's consideration of a widow's lifestyle.

⁵⁶R.Roli, in *Il Tempio di San Giacomo Maggiore* (Bologna, 1967), p.177, n.13.

Associating herself with the subject matter of the altarpiece is an acknowledgement and endorsement of Paul's instructions regarding widows.

The third widow's chapel in San Giacomo Maggiore belonged to Caterina Zanetti Bianchini⁵⁷. Most of the work on her chapel had been completed by 1598. In her will dated February 28 of that year, she leaves instruction for the addition of various items to the chapel, including two wooden benches, which she describes as being placed underneath the histories painted 'on the walls, linens, a silk altarcloth, a gold chasuble' ⁵⁸. The altarpiece for this chapel was painted by Denis Calvaert⁵⁹. Unlike the other two widow's altarpieces in San Giacomo Maggiore, Caterina is not present as a donor in portrait form. Instead she has chosen an altarpiece which refers to herself and members of her family in its depiction of saints with the same name. Calvaert's picture shows "St. Catherine with the Blessed Riniero and St. Lucia" (fig.45). Not only has Catherine chosen her namesake for one of the saints, but she has also included the Blessed Riniero, surely to allude to her own son Riniero (whom she makes her heir in her will) and St. Lucia (Caterina's will indicates that she has a relative

⁵⁷Roli (*Bologna, 1967*), p.178, note 32.

⁵⁸Testamento di Caterina Zanetti Binachetti, 28 February, 1598. Archivio Fantuzzi-Ceretoli, Istrumenti 45, no 30, ASB. The section referring to Caterina's chapel reads as follows: "*Item:- vuole la detta Signora Testatrice cio sia fornita la ferrata gia principata per la capella fatta fare di lei nella chiesa di San Giacomo Maggiore, et dare a detta Capella un Camiso qual e porto in una delle Casse di detta Testatrice, et far fare duoi scabelli di noce, et sotto l'Istorie dipinte dalle bande di detta Capella, farli fare due banche di noce, et ancora dare ad Capella un palio di seta et una pianeda di seta con oro.*"

⁵⁹See S. Bergmans, *Dionisio Calvaert, pittore d'Anversa* (Brussels, 1933) and Teresa Montella, "Dionisio Calvaert" in Fortunati Pietrantonio, Ed., (*Bologna, 1986*), pp.683-708.

called Lucia in a convent)⁶⁰.

Prospero Fontana also received a commission for an altarpiece from a widow, a member of the Salimbeni family⁶¹. She commissioned a painting of the "Annunciation" for her chapel in the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie (Milan, Brera, fig.46). The "Annunciation", signed by Prospero Fontana, (Brera, Milan) is believed to have been executed in the early 1570s. Previously, Prospero's "Annunciation" has been considered as a typical example of old style Bolognese painting in comparison to Carracci reform⁶². What has been ignored is the role of widow donor depicted on the left hand side of the picture. The widow plays a significant role within the painting's narrative. She does not simply kneel in prayer, in the customary pose of a donor. Instead she reads from a book propped up on a ledge beside her. Her gaze is directed towards its text. With the fingers of one hand, she underlines passages in the book, with the other hand she points to the scene of the Angel approaching Mary depicted behind her. It is reasonable to assume that what this widow is reading is a description of the Annunciation from the New Testament. She becomes the picture's narrator.

Michela Scolaro sees this picture as Prospero Fontana's response to Gabriele Paleotti's request that painters see their religious paintings as *libri popolari*⁶³. But Paleotti's words were

⁶⁰In selecting namesake saints for her altarpiece, Caterina may have been influenced by the altarpiece by Prospero Fontana for Alessio Orsi's chapel in S. Giacomo Maggiore, which features "St. Alessio distributing alms". Caterina has created a broader narrative than Alessio in her altarpiece by incorporating close family members, while Alessio only refers to his own name.

⁶¹Cavazzoni, Ms. B1343., f.13.

⁶²S. Freedberg, *Circa 1600, A Revolution in Style in Italian Painting* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), p.83

⁶³Lavinia Fontana ex. cat (Bologna, 1994), p.186.

not solely directed at the artists themselves but to patrons as well. Whether or not this widow herself was acting directly in response to Paleotti's advice, the role that she and Prospero have created for her in this picture allows her to leave the kind of artistic legacy of which Paleotti approved. She, a prosperous member of society, is literate and has the ability to read the Bible for herself and understand its message. As a good citizen of Bologna, she is giving to those less fortunate the gift of a vision of the "Annunciation" which they can understand without being able to read. Once again, the Salimbeni widow's presence in the picture serves as a reminder that it is she who has endowed the parish of Santa Maria delle Grazie with this gift. For as long as they remember the picture, they will not forget the face of its benefactress.

In 1588 Ludovico Carracci painted the so-called *Madonna dei Bargellini* for the Boncompagni family chapel for the church of the Convertite sisters (Bologna, Pinacoteca Comunale, fig.47)⁶⁴. Malvasia identified the saints surrounding the Madonna as representing members of the Bargellini family. He states that the figure of Santa Marta represents "Donna Cecilia". "Donna Cecilia" has recently been described as someone who had lived a life devoted to virginity⁶⁵. However, such a supposition cannot be correct as "Donna Cecilia" could only be Cecilia Bargellini Boncompagni, who died in 1596. Cecilia was married to Boncompagni Boncompagni, the brother of Gregory XIII. Their sons included Girolamo (or Ieronimo) Boncompagni who was the godfather of Lavinia's son Orazio, Cristofano, the Archbishop of Ravenna and Filippo who was made a Cardinal. As discussed

⁶⁴For the historiography of this picture, see the entry in the Ludovico Carracci ex. cat (*Bologna, 1993*) ,p.48. The Convertite was a house for reformed prostitutes who adopted a monastic lifestyle. Some subsequently left the house, others remained as nuns enforcing the discipline upon future ex-prostitutes entering the house.

⁶⁵cfr. *ut supra*, p.48.

above, Cecilia's daughter was Angiola Boncompagni Pepoli her granddaughter was Vittoria Pepoli Ruini, and her great granddaughter was the famous beauty Isabella Ruini Angelleli. Like these other women, Cecilia appears in various guises in contemporary Bolognese literature⁶⁶.

Cecilia's husband, Boncompagni Boncompagni died in 1587, leaving Cecilia in charge of a significant amount of land and property⁶⁷. The following year, Ludovico Carracci produced the "Madonna dei Bargellini". One can begin to accumulate evidence that would suggest that this commission for the Boncompagni Chapel was Cecilia's alone. She was the only Bargellini of her generation whose last name was Boncompagni, therefore probably the only one with any reason to be decorating a Boncompagni chapel. Moreover, if Malvasia is correct in his assertion that the other saints in the picture (Dominic, Francis and Mary Magdalen) also represent Bargellini family members, then Cecilia would be the only Boncompagni family member with any interest in having her own blood relatives included in her picture. Thus the painting takes on the nature of an allegorical family portrait in the

⁶⁶Cecilia allegorically plays the part of "Cinthea" in the playlet written to commemorate the wedding of Protesilao Malvezzi and Isabella Guastavillani, *Sacra Selva nelle Nozze de gli Illustri Signori Protesilao et Isabella Guastavillani* (Bologna, 1573), in which the wedding guests are given character parts. Other guests included Gregory XIII (*L'umano Giove*) and Gabriele Paleotti (*Angelico Pastore*). Francesco Lanci eulogises Cecilia her as the mother of Angiola in the book of poetry Angiola commissioned on the birth of her daughter Giulia in 1574. In Lorenzo Riario's history of the *Donne Illustre e Memorabile delle Famiglie di Bologna*, Cecilia is described as the "*matrone illustre*", admired by all. She was also godmother to Laudomia Gozzadini's daughter Berenice.

⁶⁷Notarial records indicate that Cecilia had a considerable amount of land in her own right before her husband's death. With his death, however, she would have had full control over her possessions. On her own death, her property inventory includes farmland with orchards, a house in the parish of San Giacomo, and about 3200 lire Bolognese in various banks in Bologna. *Addizione d'Eredità della Sig. Cecilia Bargellini*, 19 June, 1598. ASB Archivio di Ospedale di S. Maria delle Morte e della Vita, Eredità Boncompagni, Serie II, *Istrumenti* 38, No 19.

way that Denis Calvaert's "Saint Catherine, the Blessed Riniero and Saint Lucia" does. However, the strongest piece of evidence that this chapel decoration was one Cecilia had commissioned herself is the fact that she had a close relationship with the Monache Convertite. While she left her son Girolamo as her "erede universale", in the event of his death without issue, she substituted the Monache Convertite and asked them to say mass for her⁶⁸.

Ludovico Carracci painted the altarpiece the year after Cecilia's husband's death when she was given considerable financial autonomy, could well afford the commission and may well have wanted to mark her new found wealth by doing so. Malvasia attributed the historicizing of the Bargellini family members to Ludovico's apparent dislike of presenting donor figures in paintings, although it has been pointed out that there are other altarpieces by Ludovico in which donor portraits do appear⁶⁹. The decision not to have portrait figures may well have been Cecilia's own. Her property inventory, contains a vast array of possessions, including seven religious paintings, but there is no mention of any portraits⁷⁰. Portraiture may

⁶⁸*Testamento della Donna Cecilia Bargellini, 7 April, 1598. ASB Ospedale di S. Maria della Morte della Vita, Eredità Boncompagni, Serie II, Istrumenti 38, No 7: "Et quello poi tutti mancando et con finita la linea del sudetto descendento, e legitima et naturale, in tal caso nunc pro ut instat uisce et sustituisce le dette RR Monache Convertite et loro Monasterio omni miglior modo con gravezza all'ora di dar celebrare in perpetuo ogni primo lunedì di ciascun mese un'ufficio dei morti nella loro Chiesa con la messa Cantata per refugio et salute dell'anima sua."*

⁶⁹Ludovico Carracci ex. cat (Bologna, 1993) p.48.

⁷⁰*Ut supra note 79 for inventory reference. The paintings mentioned in Cecilia's property inventory are: "Un Anconina con l'immagine della Madonna con il Puttino et San Giovanni dipinta in legno cornisato di pero intagliato dorato, Un Anonciata di Fiorenza dipinta in legno cornisato di legno negro, Un Quadretto dipinti in tela, cioe San Giacinto, Una Trinità et Un San Francesco cornisati di legno tinto di negro, Una Madonna piccola dipinta in tela con la cornice a legno negro, et un quadro dov'è dipinto un San Francesco."*

have been a genre that did not interest her. The Saint Marta figure, which Malvasia indicates represents Cecilia, is the dominant figure in the foreground and the one who most directly assumes the traditional pose of prayer associated with the donor figure in an altarpiece. Furthermore the Saint is dressed in a heavy black cloak that can be understood as representing a widow's costume. Without appearing in an actual donor's portrait within the picture, Cecilia succeeds in making statements about herself and her widowhood, statements that would be recognisable to herself, her family and those who knew her.

There has been some disagreement about the attribution of the very badly damaged "Crucifixion with St. Jerome" in which the donors, a widow and her daughter are present. This picture was originally situated in the Baldi Chapel in the church of the nuns of San Bernardino e Santa Marta (Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale, fig.48)⁷¹. Cavazzoni attributed the painting to Denis Calvaert, Malvasia stated that it was by Lavinia Fontana⁷². Recently, Cantaro agreed with Malvasia's attribution⁷³. Even more recently, Angelo Mazza returned the painting to Calvaert on the grounds that it had a similar compositional formula to the "Saint Catherine, Blessed Riniero and Saint Lucia" in San Giacomo Maggiore⁷⁴.

While the painting may be badly damaged, there seems sufficient reason to re-attribute

⁷¹The painting is now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna. In the nineteenth-century, it was at the Villa Legatizia at S. Michele in Bosco, to where it had been moved from S. Bernardino e Marta. L. Arze and G. Giordani, *Indicazione storico artistica delle cose spettanti alla Villa Legatizia di S. Michele in Bosco* (Bologna, 1850), p.XXI.

⁷²Cavazzoni, "Suor di S. Bernardino: Ancona de Baldi di Dionisio Fiamingo". Malvasia (Bologna, 1686/1969), 154/2 "S. Bernardino. Nella prima cappella, Baldi, Il Crocefisso adorato da S. Girolamo e opera arrischiatissima della Signora Fontana.

⁷³Cantaro (Milan, 1989), pp.140-141.

⁷⁴Angelo Mazza, *La Collezione dei dipinti antichi della Casa di Risparmio di Cesena* (Cesena, 1991), pp.64-69.

the painting to Lavinia Fontana. One reason is the existence of a preparatory drawing for the altarpiece which, with its delicate shading, is technically very similar to the other drawings attributed to Lavinia Fontana and less similar to those attributed to Calvaert (whereabouts unknown fig.49)⁷⁵. Cantaro dated the altarpiece to the mid 1580s. The head of St. Jerome bears considerable resemblance to the heads of the two saints in *The Assumption of the Madonna over the Ponte Santo with Saints Cassiano and Pier Crisologo* which Lavinia painted for the chapel in of the Palazzo Communale in Imola in 1583. The anatomy of Jerome's torso, his twisting pose and his red drapes flying around him are very much like those of the St. Jerome figure she painted in a picture of the penitent saint set in a landscape, which Cantaro dated to around 1581. As no known portraits by Calvaert remain, it is impossible to say how figures studied from life by Calvaert would look, but the facial expression and modelling of the features of the widow have much more in common with Lavinia's Portrait of a Young Noblewoman in Washington, discussed above and the figures of Laudomia and Ginevra in the Gozzadini family portrait than they do with Calvaert's Barocci-inspired figures. At present, the precise identity of the Baldi widow in the *Crucifixion with St. Jerome* is unknown⁷⁶. However, whoever was the Baldi widow who

⁷⁵This drawing is reproduced in E. Llewellyn, C. Romalli, *Drawings in Bologna, 1500-1600* (ex. cat, London, 1992). For a survey of Calvaert's drawing technique, in particular his practise of creating a "mirror image" drawing, to be transferred to a painting (not the case here with this preparatory drawing for the St. Jerome altarpiece) see Wouter Th. Klok, "Calvaerts oefeningen met spiegelbeeldigheid", *Oud Holland*, 107, no 1, 1993, pp.59-75. I am grateful to Charles Ford for supplying me with a translation of this article.

⁷⁶There is no Baldi family archive. The family may have died out (or at least fallen from prominence by the eighteenth-century, as they do not feature in Dolfi's chronicle. However, judging ^{from} references to them in the notarial archives, they maintained a high profile in sixteenth-century Bologna and two Baldi women who are mentioned from this time are Leona Baldi and Giulia Baldi.

commissioned this altarpiece, she was clearly someone who recognised the special significance that St. Jerome historically held in the life of a widow and like other widow patrons before her, chose to include him in her altarpiece⁷⁷. Eugene Rice acknowledges that St. Jerome had a special appeal for noble educated women in the Renaissance because in his lifetime Jerome demonstrated particular sympathy towards women⁷⁸. He numbered some Roman patrician matrons amongst his closest correspondents. He guided them in Bible study and defended his intellectual and spiritual rapport with these women when he was attacked by his male contemporaries for treating women as having serious intellects. For many Renaissance women Jerome was therefore a much more congenial spiritual intercessor and mentor than was St. Paul. Laudomia Gozzadini, for example chose him as her patron saint and asked family members to pray for her to St. Jerome after her death⁷⁹.

Jerome approved of virtuous widows as he valued celibacy very highly. In fact, the two women with whom he was most close, were Paula and Eustochium, a wealthy widow and her daughter. Jerome apparently corresponded with them almost daily. The two women were particularly anxious that Jerome should translate the Bible into the Vulgate so that more people could have access to it. Paula and Jerome together founded a convent and a

⁷⁷Mary Vaccaro, "Documents for Parmigianino's *Vision of St. Jerome*", *Burlington Magazine*, CXXV, 1993, pp.22-27. Parmigianini's painting was commissioned in 1528 by a widow, Maria Bufalini, for her husband's burial chapel in S. Salvatore in Lauro in Rome. Vaccaro asserts that Maria would have chosen to incorporate St. Jerome into the picture as his original profession, that of consistorial lawyer, was the same as that of her husband. In the 1540s Garofalo painted a Virgin and Child with St. Jerome, which incorporated its patron, Ludovica Trotti, as a donor (now in the Pinacoteca Civica in Ferrara).

⁷⁸Eugene F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1985), p.92. He cites in particular the fifteenth-century noblewoman Isotta Nogarola, who chose to emulate Jerome's eremitic scholarly lifestyle.

⁷⁹See the discussion of Laudomia's wills in the previous chapter.

monastery in Bethlehem, Paula not only founding, but also funding the convent over which she ruled⁸⁰.

The pictorial iconography of Paula and Eustochium together with St. Jerome was established by the ninth-century⁸¹. Clearly, the Baldi widow knew enough of the life of St. Jerome to make him her patron saint and would therefore be aware of the relationship between Paula and her daughter and St. Jerome. By including her (widowed) self accompanied by her young daughter in the scene of Jerome and the Crucifixion, she allows herself and her daughter to play the parts of Paula and Eustochium.

The composition of the painting is formulated in a hierarchic manner which emphasises the didactic role Jerome played in the lives of these early Christian women, one which was ongoing in the sixteenth-century. The widow and her child are on the lowest level of the painting (although probably raised above the viewer's level). Jerome's height is raised by his having one knee upon a platform (a stairway to heaven perhaps). Christ, on the Cross, is highest of all on the pictorial plane. It is as if Jerome is explaining the Crucifixion scene to the Baldi mother and daughter.

Contemplation of the Passion of Christ on the Crucifix was a major aspect of Jerome's life and teachings⁸². A large proportion of paintings of Jerome show him beating his bare breast before a crucifix, in penitence, in the desert. He sent a description of his relationship to his crucifix and his practises before it to Eustochium, which was widely disseminated and commented upon and became the basis for pictures of Jerome and the crucifix in the

⁸⁰Rice (*Baltimore, 1985*), pp.12-14.

⁸¹Rice (*Baltimore, 1985*), p.13.

⁸²Rice (*Baltimore, 1985*), pp.76-70.

wilderness. On at least one occasion, Eustochium and her mother were included in a representation of a penitent Jerome⁸³. That Eustochium, a woman, was directly privy to Jerome's account of his devotion to the Passion of Christ, is again something that the female donor figures in the Baldi Chapel altarpiece evoke by gazing upon Jerome as he prays to the Crucifixion in their altarpiece.

Another role the Baldi widow and her daughter play in this picture is as the women at the foot of the Cross. They are actually positioned at the bottom of the Crucifix and in their black habits can be seen as mourning not only a dead husband and father, but Christ himself. They also serve to remind an informed viewer that Jerome stated that Christ Himself especially favoured women, because it was to women that he first revealed himself after his Resurrection⁸⁴.

Within what is fundamentally a very simple composition, the picture of ^{the}Baldi widow creates three narratives around herself and her daughter. On one level, they represent Paola and Eustochium, Jerome's faithful followers and confidants: on another, they can be seen as the women at the Foot of the Cross: at the same time, they are still themselves, dressed in contemporary costume, their faces no doubt recognisable to those who knew them. While the Baldi widow was clearly anxious that she and her child could be perceived within a historical tradition, no amount of symbolic role-playing must ever completely usurp their identities as wealthy Bolognese widow and her daughter.

If Jerome figured conspicuously in sermons and pictures evoking references to

⁸³Rice (*Baltimore, 1985*), p.78, uses Francesco Botticini's *St. Jerome Altarpiece* c. 1470 as an example. It was commissioned by the Rucellai family and the male and female donors are flanked by Eusebius of Cremona and Pope Damasus and Paula and Eustochium respectively.

⁸⁴Rice (*Baltimore, 1985*), p.97.

widowhood, consideration must also be given to Judith. The popularity of images of Judith with the head of Holofernes in the Italian Renaissance is unquestionable. Generally speaking, iconography of Judith is examined in the light of her capacity as the emasculating woman warrior/heroine, or else as the Mata Hari-like temptress⁸⁵. Yet she was also held up by the writers of prescriptive literature for widows as a role model of a different kind which stressed her strength in defending a cause she knew to be just⁸⁶. Given that in this literature, Judith's widowhood was emphasised, it is perhaps remarkable that more images were not made of her that alluded to her widowhood, or that studies which have images of Judith and Holofernes as subjects have not connected them with real life widows

Lavinia Fontana painted two images of Judith with the head of Holofernes that may have been purchased by, or for, widows. The first is in the Museo Davia-Bargellini, signed by Lavinia Fontana as LAVINIA FONTANA DE ZAPPIS FECE 1600 (fig.50). As Silvia Urbini concurs, if this picture had always been with the Bargellini family, then the most likely person to have commissioned the work would have been Costanza Bianchetti Bargellini⁸⁷. Costanza was godmother in 1586 to Lavinia's daughter, Laudomia. In 1596, her husband Gian Galeazzo died, under rather strange circumstances, when he fell from a wall in Pianone⁸⁸. During her life as a widow, she might well have chosen to commission a

⁸⁵Mary Garrard provides an extensive examination of Judith iconography and literature in her chapter on Artemisia's Judiths (*Princeton, 1989*), pp. 278-336. See also Paul Joannides. "Titian's Judith and its context: the iconography of decapitation", *Apollo*, 134, March 1992, pp.163-70, Yael Even, "Mantegna's Uffizi Judith: the masculinisation of the female hero", *Kunsthistorisch Tidskrift*, v 61, no1-2, pp.8-20.

⁸⁶Dolce, Cabei and Valerio all endorsed Judith.

⁸⁷Fortunati-Pietrantonio ed, (*Milan/Bologna, 1994*), p.205.

⁸⁸*Fascio di Notizie e Memorie della Casa Bargellini* B 3486, BCB.

picture of a heroic widow.

The other Judith painting, signed LAVIFONT, which stylistically appears to have been painted around the same time as the Bargellini painting is believed to have come from the Ratta family collection (property of the Oratorio di San Pellegrino, fig.51)⁸⁹. It has been argued that its patron was Monsignor Dionisio Ratta, who bought other paintings for himself, and on behalf of his family, from Lavinia Fontana⁹⁰. However, it is also possible that this painting was either bought by, or bought for, Laertia Rossi Ratta, the widow of Carlo Ratta and mother of Lorenzo Ratta, Dionisio's heir. Laertia appeared in the previous chapter, when she wrote a letter to her son from Rome, describing her visit to Laudomia Gozzadini.

The costumes of the Judith figures in Lavinia's pictures do not refer to her status as a widow. Instead their appearance invokes the Jesuit Antonio Possevino's writings on Judith, when he reminds the reader that she abandoned her widow's dress and adorned herself with jewels in order to seduce her country's oppressor⁹¹. Furthermore, the pendant arrangement of square cut rubies and pearls, set in gold, hung with drop pearls worn by the two Judiths, is strikingly similar to the one worn by the young woman in the Washington portrait by Lavinia, and to that worn by the woman in the anonymous portrait of the *Lady with an astrolabe* at Dartmouth College⁹². Given that such jewelry was part of a bride's *corredo*, a contemporary Bolognese viewer looking at these pictures of Judith would see her as having

⁸⁹Malvasia (Bologna, 1686) described seeing a "Judith lit by the light of a torch" in the Ratta house.

⁹⁰Archivio de Bosdari, *Giornale di Dionisio Ratta*, 1596-97, 428, 34-36, ASB, cited by Urbini in Fortunati-Pietrantonio ed, (*Bologna/Milan*, 1994), p.204.

⁹¹Antonius Possevinus, *Bibliotheca Selecta*, (Rome, 1593), vol 1, p.52.

⁹²See Chapter 3 "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone".

gone to kill Holofernes wearing, not only a part of her marriage regalia, but also a red dress, the colour for Bolognese brides. So in an indirect way, these Judiths reflect the honour of their husbands. The theatrical classicised dress of these Judiths constitute another instance of Lavinia's adaptation of the dress of Raphael's St. Cecilia. Given the context suggested here for their production, the reference to the St. Cecilia altarpiece may be deliberate. Raphael's St. Cecilia altarpiece was painted for Elena Duglioli dall'Olio, who was famous in her own right in Bologna for being a virtuous widow.

Lavinia's Judiths are neither beguiling seductresses nor Amazonian warriors. Indeed, the Bargellini Judith, with her calm, level gaze, has an expression somewhat reminiscent of many of Lavinia's widows' portraits. The Ratta Judith, whose face is lit by an invisible light source, can be seen as one who has received divine inspiration for her act of slaying Holofernes. Womanly strength, not weakness, underlies the rendition. Any widow lacking confidence in her new responsibilities could not but be strengthened by reflecting on this attribute.

There is one more famous Bolognese widow with whom Lavinia Fontana was associated, although there is no indication that Lavinia ever painted her portrait. She was Virginia dal Pino Malvezzi. Her husband Lucio Malvezzi died at the end of 1591, leaving her the use and income on his extensive property⁹³, which included a palazzo on the Via Galliera, which Virginia rented out for 1300 lire a year⁹⁴.

⁹³*Inventario dei Mobili situati nel Palazzo a Galliera spettante allo stato ereditario di Lucio Malvezzi fatto dalle Tutrici e Commizzari e consegnati alla Virginia dal Pino, vedova di S. Lucio con sua obbligazione*, 21 Feb, 1592. Archivio Malvezzi dal Medici, *Istrumenti*, 131, no 5. ASB.

⁹⁴Virginia rented the palazzo and its entire contents for Antonio Bartolini in a contract dated 8 July, 1596. Archivio Malvezzi dal Medici, *Istrumenti*, 132, no 35. ASB.

Sometime during the years following his death, Virginia appears to have commissioned a painting from Lavinia Fontana of the Crucifixion (of which there is no trace), in which the women at the foot of the cross were evidently emphasised⁹⁵. It would have been an appropriate choice of painting for Virginia, who dedicated her widowed years to charitable activity. When she made her will in January of 1613 she bequeathed legacies to a vast array of religious and charitable institutions in Bologna including almost all the orphanages⁹⁶.

In fact, the childless Virginia, who died on December 28, 1615, acquired her fame in Bologna through her interest in children. She appears after Lavinia Fontana in Masini's section on "Donne Bolognesi addottrinate" in *Bologna Perlustrata*⁹⁷. Masini remarks not only

⁹⁵This commission can be traced to Virginia dal Pino Malvezzi for the following reasons: The painting described as *Un Tavolo di Pittura di mano di Lavinia Fontana di un Christo in Croce, La Madonna tramortita, le Marie, S. Giovanni, e S. Francesco, con cornice dorata* appears in the inventory of the contents of the Galliera Palazzo, which Lucio Malvezzi decreed should pass to his nephew Ottavio Malvezzi following Virginia's death. See *Inventario dell'eredità di Ottavio Malvezzi*, 3 October, 1622, Archivio Malvezzi dal Medici, *Istrumenti* 135, no 31. However, this painting does not appear in the inventory of Lucio's property following his death. It therefore seems reasonable to assert that Virginia bought the picture herself and, as a part of the contents of the palace, it passed to her nephew.

⁹⁶Testamento del Virginia dell dottore di legge Paolo Pino, Vedova di Lucio Malvezzi, 29 January, 1613, Archivio Malvezzi dal Medici, *Istrumenti* 134, no 31. ASB. Virginia endowed the order of S. Francesco di Paolo with 200 lire, the Capuchins with 100, the order of S. Gregorio dalli Mendicanti with 1000 (they were to say Masses in perpetuity for her), the Confraternities of the Companies of the Santissimo Cordone di S. Francesco, the Beata Vergine in S. Maria dei Servi, La Concettione in S. Giorgio, the Beatissima Vergine di San Colombano and the Beatissima Vergine del Rosario with 25 lire each. The nuns of S. Bernardino, S. Elena, S. Omobono and the Convertite all recieved 200 apiece, The sisters of Cornus Domini received 300. The "putti" of San Bartolomeo, the Maddalena, S. Giorgic , the "putte" of Santa Marta, S. Croce and the Barracano all received 50 lire apiece. Virginia also gave an endowment to the "*Poveri Putti dei Mendicanti*", S. Bartolomeo and S. Maria Maddalena for bread to be bought regularly. See the next chapter for further discussion of orphanages.

⁹⁷Masini (*Bologna, 1666*), I, pp.666-7. The entry for Virginia reads: "*Virginia Pigna (sic) Malvezzi, non sola parlava elegantamente Latino, ma tenendo Scuola, non*

on her knowledge of Latin, but on her decision to run a school for young children and older ones too, where they would learn grammar and other (unspecified) scholastic skills. Masini reports that those who attended Virginia's school grew up to be successful and to obtain honour and dignity.

Virginia's activities as a widow reflect what was an ongoing trend in sixteenth-century Bologna, an interest in the well-being and the welfare of children at all levels of society, which is discussed in the next chapter. Clearly she responded to Gabriele Paleotti's exhortation to widows to dedicate themselves to good works. She can be numbered with the women, who like Violante Gozzadini and Margherita dal Giglio, helped to establish the Jesuits in Bologna in the 1540s and accorded them financial help or, with the widow Paziienza Barbieri instrumental in founding the Casa del Soccorso⁹⁸. Indeed, one wealthy widow, Giulia Zambecari Bianchini was anxious to ensure that future widows from her family would be able to lead independent lives perhaps dedicated to charitable endeavour. In her will of 1559 Giulia (who must have been relatively young when she wrote her will, as she leaves a number of items to her mother) made her brothers her "eredi universali", but she left numerous bequests to various women and employed female as well as male relatives as the executors of her estate⁹⁹. She had bought a house for herself, her sisters and her nieces which she intended they all could live in when they were widowed. Giulia stated that she wanted the house to remain in perpetuity as a house of widowhood for female (legitimately born)

a piccoli fanciulli, ma a Giovanetti capaci, a qualli fra l'altre virtu, insegnando loro grammatica, sono riusciti, ed hanno ottenutõ honori e Dignità, fu sepolta alle Monache del Corpus Domini adi 28 Decembre 1615."

⁹⁸See chapter 3 "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone" for the history of noblewomen's relationship with the Jesuits in Bologna.

⁹⁹See above in section on widows' costume.

members of the Zambeccari family, whom she stipulated should be over the age of thirty and who should be inclined towards leading a spiritual life, or as tertiaries¹⁰⁰. What such a bequest safeguarded, was that no Zambeccari widow, if she could neither live no longer in her husband's house nor return to her patrimonial home, would feel pressure to remarry in order to ensure a roof over her head. In other words, Giulia Zambeccari Bianchini's bequest safeguarded the capacity of Zambeccari widows to conserve their dignity and dedicate themselves to good works.

An examination of the widows on Lavinia Fontana's easel is to become aware of their varied and complex lives and of a very specific widow identity. The shadowy cipher of one version of the widow of the good conduct book cedes ground to a woman as a positive force in the perpetuation of family strength and interests and in the promotion of the philanthropic endeavour of the Counter Reformation. Gabriele Paleotti was the son of Gentile della Volta

¹⁰⁰Giulia Zambeccari Bianchini's provisions read as follows:

"Lascio con il nome di Dio la detta Casa comprata per me a mei Sorelle et a mie nepote pero in Caso di viduita. Et questo voglio sta sempre per tutte le vedove di Casa nostra pero uscite da nostra Padre et da nostra Madre et per quelle che potra venire de la nostra propria Casa. Comenciando pero sempre alle pie prossime o una o pie secondo se gli potranno accomodare. Dechirando ancora che tutto quello che per me in questo Testamento e disposto et ordinato a favor delle sudette donne s'intenda anchor et cosi voglio sia ordinato a favor di ciascuna delle sudette che volessero far vita spirituale o di terza ordine o in qualcuno altro modo anchor che non fossero Vedove et non havessero mai per alcun tempo havuto marito per le dette donne spirituali habbino anni Trenta. Anchora voglio sia di tutte quelle vedove che per mala disgratia havessero figlioli et cosi non si trovassero comode mi contento gli venghino et paghino una pigione honesta delle beni di suoi figlioli. Dico pero non gli esse no altra. Dechirando che le donne che serano naturale et non nate de legitimo matrimonio non possino haver parte, ne giuriditione alcuna in detta Casa. Attento che tutto quello che per me nel presente testamento e disposto circa la detta casa voglio sia a favore delle sudette donne che pero sono nate de legitimo matrimonio et non di Bastarde."

Paleotti, a poetess in her own right, widowed at a very early age with five young children¹⁰¹. She found herself abandoned by her husband's family, but mustered connections to assure the future Archbishop and his brothers an education and prospects¹⁰². There is surely little doubt that it was the example of his forceful widowed mother that made Paleotti have faith in the capabilities of the Bolognese woman.

A widow similar to Gentile is the mother of the Bolognese historian Pompeo Vizzani. In an unpublished family chronicle of 1585, he writes with great pride about his mother Elizabetta¹⁰³. Like Gentile della Volta, Elizabetta was left a young widow by her husband Camillo in charge of three small sons, Pompeo, Camillo and Giasone in 1541. Pompeo describes how this "loving mother" took over governing the house and family, watched over her sons and ensured that they were instructed in all the liberal arts and made conversant with every manner of etiquette and custom. Furthermore, she was responsible for the building of the Palazzo Vizzani in the Piazza di San Biagio¹⁰⁴. Elizabetta, Pompeo reports, always lead a *vita vedovile* (and had been one for forty-one years at the time that Pompeo was writing). Pompeo also asserted that among all the matrons of Bologna she was held in the highest

¹⁰¹Paolo Prodi, (Rome, 1967), vol 1, pp. 42-48. See also the entry for Gentile in Lorenzo Maria Riario, *Delle Donne Illustri e Memorabile delle Famiglie di Bologna*, BCB, written at the end of the 17th century, which describes her as having "*Ogni prerogativa eccellente di virtu, di bellezza, di nobilit , e di Fortuna(!)... celebre per la vedovanza servata et educazione preitata da una generosa figliolanza...*"

¹⁰²Pellegrino Orlandi, *Notizie degli Scrittori Bolognesi* (Bologna, 1714), p.352: *Gentile Volta... fu illustre Poetessa*"

¹⁰³*Vita, gesti, et costumi di Pompeo Vizzani, scritta da lui medesimo nell'anno del signore CDC LXXV, et di sua eta XLV*, B164 BCB.

¹⁰⁴Giancarlo Roversi, *I Palazzi e Case Nobili del '500 A Bologna* (Bologna, 1986), p.201. In Pellegrino Lamo's *Graticola di Bologna* (Bologna, 1560), p.12 the building of the "Famous" Vizzani palace is attributed to *una gentildonna vedova bolognese, nominata Madona Isabeta de Vigiano, fa fare una bela fabrica molto laudabile*.

esteem¹⁰⁵.

It is quite clear that there were few Bolognese widows who built a life entirely on the sands of prescription. The portraits and altarpieces by Lavinia Fontana permit an unparalleled opportunity to uncover the multi-faceted identity of widowhood, which could transcend both the passivity of grief and the simple recognition of loss. Taking their lives into their own hands under new circumstances, Lavinia's widows embraced managerial and administrative roles both on behalf of their own families and a wider society. When their descendants viewed the work they had commissioned, these individual sagas of strength and personal initiative would be remembered and recounted.

¹⁰⁵Pompeo's description of his mother runs as follows: "*Lizabetta, mia madre, la quale ha subito doppo la morte di Camillo suo marito, et padre mio, prese la cura, et il governo della faculta, da lui lasciate, et di noi suoi figliuoli, et menando sempre vita vedovile, come ha fatto fino a quest'hora, per spazio di quaranta quattro anni, governo la faculta con gran solitudine et nettamente, et i figliuoli con molto amor et vigilanza, et perciò fra l'altre matrone di Bologna è tenuti da tutti in molto pregio. Non ci lascia, va questa madre amorevili mancanti maestri di creanza et altri, che mentre erano fanciulli vi ammaestrassero di buoni costumi, et mille arti liberali...*"

CHAPTER SIX

PUTTI, PICTURES AND PEDAGOGY

In his sermon for December 15, 1577, Gabriele Paleotti reminded the female members of his congregation of something that they doubtless already knew. He told them that they must consider themselves fortunate if God chose to grant them the blessing of children, but that they should remember that this gift was one accompanied by much pain and sorrow¹. Not only would women have to bear agonizing pain in labour, but they could never be assured that their children would live to adulthood, or even survive infancy². Lavinia Fontana experienced such pain of loss, as is evinced by the little crosses Gian Paolo Zappi would make by the names of their children who died, most only a few days, or even hours, after being born. Next to the cross he would write a note to say that they had passed to a better life. Child mortality amongst the patrician families was very high too. Laudomia Gozzadini would not have been the only Bolognese noblewoman who had to bear the burden of both personal sorrow for the death of her children and her husband's resentment of her inability to bear healthy male heirs.

In as much as parents in early modern Europe lived with the fear of still birth, inexplicable sudden death (what is known today as cot death), plague, or any number of childhood ailments, society as a whole was both appalled and fascinated by "monsters", that is ugly, deformed and misshapen humans. There is not a single European country

¹Gabriele Paleotti, "Del Matrimonio" (*Bologna, 1580*), p.88.

²Works on conception, pregnancy and motherhood for the early modern period include J. Flandrin, *Families in Former Times* (Cambridge, 1979), J. Gélis *History of Childbirth: Fertility, Pregnancy and Birth in Early Modern Europe* (trans. R. Morris, Cambridge, 1991), and O. Niccoli (ed.), *Infanzia, terra di frontiera* (Florence, 1993).

that does not produce broadsheets or tracts regarding the appearance or birth of monsters in their part of the world.³ Amboise Paré's *Sur Monstres et Prodiges* is probably the best known collection of images of freaks and aberrations from this period⁴. Around the time that Lavinia Fontana was born, Italy was particularly intrigued by the birth of Siamese twins in the ghetto in Venice⁵.

Bologna too shared Europe's preoccupations with the monstrous birth. The birth of a deformed or "monstrous" child was an event that could cause a disturbance felt by the whole city, and beyond. Little Maria Malatendi was born just outside the city walls of Bologna on January 9th, 1514, with three eyes, no nose, and a projection that grew from her head like a cockscomb. Although she lived only four days, the "Monster of Bologna", as she was called, came to the attention of dignitaries in Venice and Rome. When a fire gutted the Rialto several weeks later, the Papal Ambassador to Venice believed that Maria's birth had been an omen of the catastrophe⁶. Ghiselli recounts the arrival in Bologna in 1582 of a "*mostro inglese*", who was about ten years in age. This creature was about two foot tall, with an enormous head and huge feet. He was

³For information on monstrous birth literature, consult the extensive bibliography in Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents. Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London, 1993). The earliest work on the subject appears to be Eucharius Roselin's *Des Divers Travaux et Enfantements des Femmes* (Rouen, 1532).

⁴Amboise Paré, *Sur monstres et prodiges* (Paris, 1583), reprinted in English as *On Monsters and Marvels*, ed. Janis L. Pallister, (Chicago, 1982), p.39.

⁵*Nova et ridicolosa espositione del Mostro nato in Ghetto* (Venice, 1575). See Dudley Wilson (*London, 1993*), pp.51-52

⁶ This incident is recounted in Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy* (Princeton, 1990), pp.52-3.

allegedly accompanied by eight servants on horseback, who declared that their master was a gentleman⁷. In 1620, on a practical, rather than voyeuristic note, the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Ludovisi had provisions on baptism published, to include what should be done for the baptism of "That which is born a monster, which does not display a human form". What one today would identify as Siamese twins, were considered in Ludovisi's time to be monsters, since the ritual for the baptism of monsters includes the blessing of any extra head or other limbs that the "monster" may possess⁸.

Not surprisingly, the man in Bologna most fascinated by the birth of monstrous creatures was the natural scientist, Ulisse Aldrovandi. Aldrovandi, who devoted much of his professional life to collecting and documenting wonders of nature, had illustrations made of every kind of human and animal aberration that he could find⁹. Aldrovandi was interested in the hirsute and one family in particular who became famous for their condition. They were the Gonzales from the Canary Islands and they had hair that grew all over their faces. The father, Petrus (probably born in 1556) had passed the abnormality onto his two children, Tognina and Arrigo. He exhibited himself and his children throughout Europe, before settling in Parma in 1583, becoming part of the Farnese retinue of living curiosities. Agostino Carracci painted Arrigo ("hairy Harry"), who was taken by Cardinal Odoardo Farnese to Rome, in the company of a dwarf ("Tiny

⁷Ghiselli, *Ms 770 BUB*, vol XVI, p.550.

⁸ *"Se nacesse un mostro, il quale non mostrare forma humane" - Avvertimenti dati dall'illus. et reverendiss. Sig. Cardinal Ludovisi - Archivescovo di Bologna, intorno all'ammistrare in caso di necessità il sacramento del battismo (Bologna, 1620), p.3.*

⁹See Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature, Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, 1994) and Ulisse Aldrovandi, *Monstrorum Historia*, (Bologna, 1605). Published in Bologna, 1642, by Bernardo Ambrosini.

Amon") and a wild man, who also belonged to the Farnese¹⁰.

Tognina Gonzales was brought to Bologna in 1583 and was an object of great curiosity. She was examined by Ulisse Aldrovandi, who obtained pictures of her and her father. In the record he made of these pictures, Aldrovandi described Petrus Gonzales as a "wild man" (*Homus sylvester*), but he described his daughter as a hairy girl (*Puella hirsuta*). These portraits were not however to be solely more illustrations for his collection of monsters (although there is a hairy girl among them). Instead, he displayed them at his country villa, alongside portraits of himself and his wife and the Medici Duke and Duchess, who acted as financial backers for some of his projects¹¹. The portrait of the hairy girl was inscribed with the words "My portrait shows me hairy of hand and face, but beneath my clothes I am all skin". The inscription suggests a compassion for the little girl, reminding the visitor to Aldrovandi's villa that she is no less human than Aldrovandi and his wife, nor than his illustrious patrons.

It seems certain that Aldrovandi's portrait of Tognina Gonzales was painted by Lavinia Fontana. There is a drawing of a little girl, her face covered in hair, in the album of nineteen drawings by Lavinia in the Pierpoint Morgan Library (fig.52). This drawing corresponds exactly with an unsigned painting, upon which the very last traces of a now undecipherable inscription remain. There was evidently an element of pity and understanding on the inscription on the hirsute child's portrait in Aldrovandi's possession,

¹⁰This picture is in the Capodimonte Museum in Naples. See Roberto Zapperi, "Arrigo le Velu, Pietro le Fou, Amon le Nain et autres bêtes: autour d'un tableau d'Agostino Carracci", *Annales*, 40, 1985, pp.307-327.

¹¹See Findlen, (*Berkeley*, 1994), pp.308-309 and Mario Fanti, "La Villeggiatura di Ulisse Aldrovandi", *Strenna Storica Bolognese*, 8, 1958, pp.17-43.

and it seems quite comprehensible in light of Lavinia's pictorial treatment of the little girl. She has been depicted for her freakish condition, yet it is not a cruel, or even purely scientific interpretation. Her face is covered in soft downy hair, which grows in a different direction from the hair on her head, which is gathered in the kind of top knot as worn by children of the period. Despite the hair, her facial features are fully visible, and Lavinia has paid particular attention to her eyes which have an intelligent and lively expression. Tognina is presented as a child of great composure and, but for her hairy face, she is little different from the other children Lavinia painted. If the faded inscription on the painted portrait of her, was that recorded by Aldrovandi, it would certainly correspond with these words, since she is clothed ("beneath my clothes I am all skin") and indeed dressed very properly in a blue dress with red buttons and a high white collar.

The composition of the portrait makes it an appropriate one to display within the context of stressing Tognina Gonzales' "normality" - that is the "normality" of self beneath the "abnormality" of hair. Its design is little different from Lavinia's other portraits of Bolognese citizens, depicting the girl at bust length, in a rather upright stance and one imagines the other portraits in the same room in the Aldrovandi Villa were of a similar design. As with other of Lavinia's portrait sketches, the drawing provides some clue to her working practice, as the face is rendered with great detail and the dress just barely sketched.

The humanity of this picture is worth contrasting with the painting by Agostino Carracci of Tognina's brother, Arrigo and two of the other Farnese "freaks". The Carracci painting quite literally displays these fellows in an exotic tropical surrounding complete with exotic animals. Arrigo seems less a human being than an artist's creation of a fantastical creature. Not clothed in this picture in proper dress, Arrigo is instead wears

a fur pelt to emphasise the fur-like nature of his own condition and probably also to underline that his hair brings him into greater proximity with an animal-like savage than with other members of the human race. His face, whose hair covering is almost identical to that of his sister, is expressionless and his gaze seemingly wild.

Carracci's picture is "staged", of course. In real life Arrigo probably dressed in as normal a fashion as his sister and he apparently acted as a valet to Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, so his manners were probably impeccable. Yet for posterity, the Farnese needed him recorded as an alien "other", to demonstrate their ability to own all that was marvelous in the known world. Ulisse Aldrovandi, with his compulsion to document all that was wondrous, animal, vegetable or mineral, evidently felt a different need when it came to possessing a visual record of Tognina Gonzales. It is possible that Lavinia drew Tognina of her own accord when the girl came to Bologna and was seen by all who were curious. Possibly Aldrovandi requested a painted portrait of the girl having seen Lavinia's sketch. An alternative and perhaps more plausible explanation may be that Aldrovandi asked Lavinia to draw and paint her, recognising that Lavinia could produce a visual document that was not merely scientific, but which also contained some sympathy and understanding for the hirsute child.

In the attitude of Aldrovandi and his society towards the monstrous, one sees a merger between science and superstition. Monstrous apparitions of any sort were held to be potentially prophetic and the repercussions of their appearance had to be examined carefully. Scientific wisdom attributed the birth of a monstrous child to the sins of the parents, to the performance of coitus during menstruation, and to the mother's imagination

during pregnancy¹². The eyes were an opening to the imagination and to the body. It followed that whatever a woman saw when she was pregnant was likely to have an effect on the child that she bore. For example, if the pregnant woman laid eyes on the abnormal - which could range from a tortoise to a beggar with a hair lip - then it was possible her child could be born with a tortoise-like appearance, or a hair lip itself. It is not difficult to imagine the anxiety and guilt experienced by the woman who, believing her period over, finds a last trickle of menstrual fluid following coitus, or, who while pregnant, looks out of her window, and sees a cripple standing below, and wonders what effects these incidents might have on the appearance of her child.

Pictures that women gazed upon at the moment of conception could also affect the child's appearance. Significantly, in France, both Montaigne and Amboise Paré were intrigued by a hirsute little girl from Pisa, who was exhibited in the same way as Tognina Gonzales. Her mother attributed her daughter's hairiness to the fact that a painting of John the Baptist in the wilderness had hung over her marriage bed, and the image of the hirsute saint had been transcribed to the child¹³

Fortunately for a pregnant woman there was a converse side to this pattern of belief. If catching sight of the ugly and misshaped, or viewing the freakish could cause a negative effect on a child's appearance, then gazing at the beautiful could have a positive effect. Both within and outside of Italy there were men who recommended hanging beautiful images in a bedroom, upon which women should gaze, so they might

¹²See Ottavia Niccoli, "'Menstruum Quasi Monstruum': Monstrous Births and Menstrual Taboo in the Sixteenth Century" in *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective*, E.Muir and G.Ruggiero (Baltimore, 1990 trans. Mary Gallucci), pp. 1-26.

¹³Montaigne, *Essais*, I, Chap XX, (published 1613).

produce beautiful children. Leon Battista Alberti approved this practise, as did Vives¹⁴.

The issue of the monstrous birth, and ways in which it could be avoided, taxed Gabriele Paleotti. In the discourse on sacred and profane images, Paleotti demonstrated that he was aware of the power of images over the female imagination¹⁵. In a chapter on the magical effects of images, he recounts an incident described by the Ancient Greek writer Hippocrates, about an Ethiopian Queen who was accused of committing adultery after giving birth to a white child. However, her life was saved when it was realised that there was a picture of a white prince hanging over her bed. It was believed that the white form had permeated her imagination, which was then in turn imprinted upon the child in her womb. Paleotti also recounts Heliodorus' description of the King of Cyprus. The Cypriot King was so hideously ugly, that he had a picture of Adonis hung above his wife's bed, upon which she might gaze during the conjugal act, in order to preclude his own unfortunate appearance from having an adverse effect on the appearance of the offspring that his wife might conceive.

Paleotti was not alone in Bologna in believing that appropriate images might be one means to help preserve a woman from the terrible effects of her vision and her

¹⁴Leon Battista Alberti, *L'Architettura*, (1485, ed. G. Orlandi, Milan, 1964), Book IX, chapter 4, pp.804-805. Juan Luis Vives, *Linguae Latinae Exeritatio* (Basle, 1555), p.30-31. In the section entitled *Domus*, Vives recommends hanging pictures of beautiful men, such as Hercules, or another Greek God in bedrooms. See also Herman Roodenberg, "The Maternal Imagination, the Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth Century Holland", *Journal of Social History*, (1988), pp.701-716. The poet Jacob Cats also advised pregnant women to gaze at pictures of comely children and beautiful statues.

¹⁵Gabriele Paleotti, "Dei vari effetti notabili causati dalle immagini pie e devoti" (*Bologna, 1582. Bari, 1961*) I, pp.229-233. David Freedberg cites Paleotti's accounts in "The Power of Images, Response and Repression" in *The Power of Images; Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago and London, 1989), p.2.

imagination. He was both confirmed, and doubtless influenced in this viewpoint by Ulisse Aldrovandi. Aldrovandi was another of those esteemed enough by Paleotti to criticise the *Discorso* and subsequently he wrote several pages of commentary for Paleotti¹⁶. In his commentary Aldrovandi agreed with Paleotti on the possible miraculous effects of images on a mother's imagination. To alleviate these potential problems, Aldrovandi also recommended that married couples should hang pictures of people of great beauty in their bedrooms, in order to generate beautiful children.

Renaissance Italy enjoyed a variety of objects designed as aids in birth and the production of a beautiful child, among them birthing salvers (*deschi di parto*), talismanic stones, or prints and prayers of St. Margaret to be laid on a mother's stomach while she was giving birth¹⁷. Furthermore, in Bologna, a specific type of religious picture also reappears in property inventories of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century - the *quadro* (or *quadretto*) *dal letto*. This type of picture was evidently designed specifically to hang over a bed, or to be attached to the bedframe. Its subject matter was usually a scene from the life of Christ, and Annunciations and the Madonna and Child were also

¹⁶Ulisse Aldrovandi, *Avvertimenti del Dottore Aldrovandi sopra le pitture mostrifiche et prodigiose all'Ill.mo Mons: il Cardinal Paleotti, Sig.r et Patron suo colendissimo*, 1580. Ottavia Niccoli discusses Aldrovandi's text, (*Baltimore*, 1990), p.6.

¹⁷See Jacqueline Musacchio, "Imaginative Conceptions in Renaissance Italy" in S. Matthews Grieco, G. Johnson, eds., *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (Cambridge, forthcoming) for examples of articles used as talismans in pregnancy and Sara Matthews Grieco, "Persuasive Pictures: Didactic Prints and the Social Identity of Women in 16th Century Italy" (forthcoming), for the use of images of St. Margaret and prayers to her by pregnant women in labour.

popular images¹⁸. These pictures were used for devotional purposes or may have had protective functions. They most frequently represented Christ as a child, or the story of His conception and they were positioned above the bed, the place where sexual intercourse would normally take place and where a pregnant woman would spend a great deal of time resting. Therefore, it seems very likely that many of these *quadri dal letto* would have had the specific function of promoting the birth of a handsome and healthy child. One such image mentioned in the 1611 inventory of Giovanna Cortellini's property is described as depicting "a little Saviour, sleeping"¹⁹.

It is therefore pertinent that, in the 1590s, Lavinia Fontana produced a whole series of small paintings of the *quadri dal letto* type that feature the Christ Child, asleep, with His family surrounding Him (figs.53 a, b and c)²⁰. These small images were apparently adapted from a large scale painting of the "Holy Family with the Sleeping Christ Child", signed and dated 1589 (fig.54). This picture, one of Lavinia's most prestigious

¹⁸Examples of such works are cited as "*Un quadrettino dal letto d'una Madonna col puttino dipinto in rame cornisato al nero*" in the *Inventario legale fatta della Molt. Illustre Signora Camilla Calzolari*, 23 October, 1609, Fondo Fibbia /Fabri, Documenti Bonfiglioli, Filza 2, No 269, ASB (see the appendix for a full transcription of this inventory of paintings); *Un quadrettino da letto con la Madonna, il Puttino e S. Caterina* from *Inventario del Eredità del Guido Orsi*, July 1606, Archivio Orsi, Istrumenti 140, ASB and *Un quadrettino d'una Nunziata da tener dal letto* from *Inventario dello Stato Ereditario di Ottavio Malvezzi*, 3 October 1622, Archivio Malvezzi de Medici, Istrumenti, 135, no 31, ASB.

¹⁹ (Un quadro di) *Un Salvatore piccolo, che dorme, dal letto* in *Inventario dei beni, e Mobili della Sig. a Giovanna Cortellini, Consegnati al Sig. Lorenzo Sala suo marito*, Archivio Ranuzzi-Cospi, Istrumenti, Filza 28, No 61, ASB.

²⁰ Malvasia (*Bologna, 1678*), I, p.224 states that Lavinia Fontana produced at least a dozen paintings on this theme, of which only five are known today. These include one in the Villa Borghese (signed and dated 1591), one in Stockholm, two in private collections and one in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

commissions was sent to the Escorial and now serves as the altarpiece in the burial chapel for the Spanish Infanti²¹.

The theme of the sleeping Christ Child was one that enjoyed great popularity throughout the sixteenth-century, and it is hardly surprising that Lavinia Fontana employed iconographic motifs adapted from works by numerous other painters. Particularly evident are the influences on her composition of the well known Sebastiano del Piombo "Madonna and Sleeping Child" (Naples, Capodimonte), and the renowned Michelangelo drawing, "Silentium" (Welbeck Abbey). Numerous painted copies and prints were made of each of these works, including a print of Silentium by the Bolognese etcher Giulio Bonasone²². In Bologna, Orazio Sammachini created his own series of "Sleeping Child" paintings (examples are in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Parma, and the Palazzo Communale in Bologna), and Lavinia Fontana used his motif of the Christ Child asleep on His back in the painting correctly attributed to her in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (fig.55).

Traditionally, the topos of the sleeping Child as interpreted by the artists mentioned above, was a symbol of the Passion of Christ. In Sebastiano's interpretation of the theme, Mary's veil drawn over Christ's body can be seen as a prefiguration of the

²¹ Francesco Pacheco records the arrival of the Fontana painting in Madrid in 1593. He says two thousand ducats was paid for it. *Arte della Pittura*, (1638, reprinted Madrid, 1956) p.148.

²² At least thirteen copies were made of Sebastiano del Piombo's "Madonna and Sleeping Child", Mauro Lucco and Carlo Volpe, *L'opera Completa di Sebastiano del Piombo*, (Milan, 1981), pp. 85-86. Not only did Bonasone make prints of Michelangelo's "Silentium" drawing, but there are also Marcello Venusti-type paintings based on the design in Rome, London, Yale, Liverpool, Leipzig and Dresden. Roberto Longhi attributed the Liverpool painting to Fontana, but without substantial grounds. *Foreign Catalogue, Walker Art Gallery*, (Liverpool, 1977), pp.73-74.

time when His mother will enshroud her Son for the last time. In this instance, His sleep is understood to denote the sleep of death²³. In the compositional design of Michelangelo's *Silentium*, the sleeping child sprawled across His mother's lap appears as a juvenile version of the *Pietà* iconography. The detail of Michelangelo's hour glass is a further symbol of mortality, wherein the grains of life rapidly disappear.

Although Lavinia Fontana draws iconographically on these preceding images, her interpretation of the *Holy Family with the Sleeping Child* is entirely her own. In the Fontana paintings, Mary's veil is barely visible and is being drawn away from the child's body, rather than over it. The veil's presence also allows the Virgin to make an elaborate gesture with her hand that both reveals and draws attention to her baby's body. As in the examples discussed above, the presence of the veil here helps to maintain a kind of iconographic decorum, but it is less a portent of woe, and more a device for displaying and inviting admiration of the Christ Child's body. Although Fontana groups her figures in a similar manner to those in the Michelangelo design, there is less gravity and solemnity in her Holy Family, who seem to be taking a sweeter, more simple pleasure in watching the baby sleep.

Pride is reflected in the faces of the Fontana Holy Family - a pride taken not only in the fact that this Child is the Saviour of the World, but also in the fact that he is a beautiful baby boy. He is a perfect, and a real baby, one who has blonde curls, and the pink chafed knees of the infant trying to stand and who still crawls more than he walks.

²³ Gizella Firestone, "The Sleeping Child in Italian Renaissance Representations of the Madonna", *Marsyas*, II, 1942, pp.43-62. Firestone suggested that the sleeping Child is a Renaissance interpretation of a Hellenic funerary motif, depicting a sleeping Eros.

Blood is coursing through the baby's body. This rosiness is a sign of life, an abnegation of the death of Christ referred to in the previous paintings of the subject. Furthermore, He is pushed out into the viewer's space. The painting from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is shaped like an inverted trapezium (40 x 25 cms), and the Christ Child seems to be placed on a ledge that projects Him forward, allowing the viewer a closer relationship with the baby. This baby is not a symbol of mortality, but a representation of the kind of child any Bolognese woman would have admired, and the kind of child any mother would have wanted.

These small devotional paintings of mother and child were given to women as marriage gifts, or as presents on the announcement of a pregnancy since numerous references to *quadretti* of the Madonna and Child appear in Bolognese *corredi*²⁴. Lavinia Fontana's little pictures of the Sleeping Christ Child would certainly have made appropriate gifts. They are small, and thus easily transportable. Most of them are painted on copper, a highly stable, durable and expensive support that only adds to the object's preciousness. They are surrounded by elaborate frames and hence were expensive both to produce and purchase. As such, they are not the kind of devotional painting an artist would make on the off chance of a sale since the running costs would be too high, but were instead for a special occasion and purpose, marriage or childbed. Over and above their immediate devotional function, the most probable purpose of such paintings would have been to help a woman conceive and deliver a child that would look like the one

²⁴ L. Frati, (*Bologna, 1900*) pp.62-63.

depicted in the picture²⁵.

Evidence suggests that two of Lavinia Fontana's Holy Family paintings were bought for married couples. The picture now in Stockholm was originally in the hands of the Caprara family²⁶. One of the families with whom the Caprara had allied themselves were the Bentivoglio, and, sometime during the 1590s, Massimo Caprara married Caterina Bentivoglio²⁷. During this same period, the Bentivoglio commissioned Lavinia Fontana to paint an "Assumption of the Virgin" (signed and dated 1593) for their family chapel in the church of San Francesco Oltre Reno at Pieve di Cento just outside of Bologna. Thus, in 1593, a patronage link between the Bentivoglio and Lavinia Fontana had been established and it is highly probable that a member of the Bentivoglio family bought this little Holy Family painting for Caterina on her marriage to Massimo Caprara.

In the second instance, the picture frame of the painting in the Borghese collection which is generally considered to date from the late sixteenth-century, actually bears a

²⁵Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Holy Dolls: Piety and Play in Florence in the Quattrocento" (*Chicago*, 1985), pp. 310-329, demonstrates that dolls often fashioned in the image of the Christ Child had been a part of the wealthy Florentine girl's dowry since the fifteenth century. While suggesting a number of reasons for their creation, Klapisch-Zuber (p.311, n.7) does cite Giuseppe Marcotti, *Un mercante fiorentino e la sua famiglia nel secolo XV*, (Florence, 1881), who says that the presence of the dolls "can be explained...by the belief that the woman would engender a child analogous to the image that she keeps before her eyes during pregnancy".

²⁶ Karin Radstrom, "La collezione Galliera già Caprara nel Palazzo Reale di Stoccolma", *Carrobbio*, XII, 1986, pp.293-306.

²⁷ Pompeo Scipione Dolfi, (*Bologna*, 1770/ 1990) pp. 239-242. Dolfi is often more interested in tracing family alliances than in providing accurate dates for family events. Thus, one can only assume that Massimo and Caterina were married some time towards the end of the sixteenth-century.

Borghese crest, suggesting that the painting was made for this family²⁸. In 1591, the date of the painting, Camillo Borghese was Vice-legate to Bologna, and it is likely that it was Camillo himself who commissioned the painting. He may have bought it for one of his married sisters or sisters-in-law who it was alleged had great difficulty conceiving²⁹. Whoever the recipient of the painting may have been, it seems to have been well received, as the Borghese continued to extend their patronage towards Lavinia Fontana after she came to Rome.

As instruments to be used by a woman in pregnancy, Lavinia Fontana's Holy Family paintings then served several purposes. As the pregnant woman gazed upon the painting, the beauty of the Christ Child could imprint itself upon her mind. The fact that the image of the baby is pictured peacefully sleeping might further this design. From Hippocrates' time onwards, the foetus in the womb was imagined as being asleep. Late sixteenth-century obstetric treatises portrayed the foetus in the womb as a fully formed child, lying on its side in a dormant state³⁰. While meditating on the little sleeping Child in the painting, a woman could imagine that the child in her womb was precisely the same in appearance as the baby depicted in the picture, and this correspondence would supposedly facilitate the process of image transferral.

²⁸ The picture and its frame are described in a Borghese family property inventory of 1693. Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.156.

²⁹ Patricia Waddy, *Seventeenth Century Roman Palaces - The Use and Art of the Plan* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), pp.75-78. Camillo Borghese had three married brothers, but Waddy indicates that only one couple, Francesco Borghese and Virginia Lante (married 1588), actually produced a son who lived to adulthood, Marcantonio (born 1601), "the only Borghese of his generation, and the focus of his family's hopes.."

³⁰ Jacques Gélis, (*Cambridge, 1991*) p.50.

These paintings could also be used in a more traditional way as devotional icons to pray to God to grant the safe delivery of a healthy child. An older woman who was attempting to conceive might derive comfort from the presence of Saint Elizabeth in the Holy Family. Certainly, Elizabeth, who barren for so long, shamed in her community, and only conceiving in her later years, was a figure with whom a mature woman might more easily identify than with the Immaculate Mary. For gestating mothers, Mary's presence has a different value. According to Christian doctrine, Mary suffered no pain during the birth of Christ, something for which every pregnant woman would pray when her own time came to pass³¹. However, later in life, Mary suffered the pain and sorrow of losing a child, of which Paleotti spoke in his sermon³². The woman who miscarried, or whose child was short-lived, could reflect on God's will. She might have found consolation in the imagery of Mary with her child, in that pose which is reminiscent of the Passion of Christ, when the Son is finally taken from the Mother. The woman who lost her child might then find an empathy and reassurance in the thought that what she herself has had to endure, was also endured by the Mother of God.

It is tempting to think that Lavinia Fontana herself may have used these Marian images for such purposes. Most of these devotional images were produced in the 1590s, when Fontana (now in her forties, an especially perilous time to give birth) produced two

³¹ Julia I. Miller "Miraculous Childbirth and the Portinari Altarpiece", *Art Bulletin*, LXXVII, 2, 1995, pp. 249-262. She discusses this protective aspect of Mary's role in Hugo van der Goes' picture when it hung in the chapel belonging to Tommaso Portinari (when his wife, Maria Baroncelli was of child-bearing age) in San Egidio, the church of the Arcispedale Santa Maria Nuova.

³²*c.f. supra* note 1.

children, Severo (born in 1592) and Costanza (born in 1595)³³. She might have painted some of these pictures of the sleeping Christ Child while pregnant herself. She was the one making the pictures and the images of the figures emerged from her imagination. She may have believed it to be beneficial to the child in her womb to focus upon the image of the beautiful Child that she was creating, in the hope that her child would be the same. Certainly, her beliefs would conform with those of the others in her circle, Gabriele Paleotti and Ulisse Aldrovandi.

While there is no surviving documentary evidence that confirms that Lavinia Fontana's sleeping Child paintings were used for the purposes outlined above, their content, the quantities of paintings produced, and the climate of opinion relating to the birth process collectively suggest that these images would have been appropriate devotional pictures for women experiencing pregnancy and motherhood. Such an image was believed to help the expectant mother ensure the production of a perfect child during the months of waiting and to serve as a focus for meditation to avoid a disagreeable or a monstrous birth. She could pray to the devotional image for an easy birth and a living child - but she also must acknowledge the possibility of death. Moreover, as is discussed below, should the baby be fortunate enough to live, she could use the same painting to teach the child about the Holy Family. These were images of great economy that encompassed magical, miraculous, and pedagogical functions.

Elisabetta Vizzani, one of Bologna's most respected society widows, renowned for the building of the Vizzani palace and raising her three sons single-handedly was discussed in the previous chapter. Here, the focus shifts to one of her sons, Giasone, his

³³Gian Paolo Zappi, *Libro di baptismo*.

family and the altarpiece by Lavinia Fontana that Giasone erected in the Church of the Arciconfraternità del Ospedale della Morte (fig.56). This altarpiece, to all intents and purposes, acted as a votive icon, a *grazia ricevuta* for the birth of a son to Giasone and his wife.

The Arciconfraternità della Morte was all male and it encompassed some of the most high ranking citizens of Bologna³⁴. Among these were a number of Lavinia Fontana's patrons and associates. Godfathers to her children, such as Ieronimo Boncompagni and Raffaele Riario were members, as was Costanza Alidosi's husband, Ridolfo Isolani, Isabella Ruini's father, Carlo Ruini and her husband Giovanni Angelleli³⁵. Ulisse Aldrovandi was a member, as were male members of the Pepoli, Orsi, Malvezzi, Fava, Bianchetti, Bonfioli and Bentivoglio families. On June 3, 1590, Giasone Vizzani was made rector of the confraternity. This appointment was clearly coincident with Giasone establishing and decorating a chapel in the confraternity's church. The altarpiece that he commissioned Lavinia Fontana to paint was of decidedly unusual subject matter for that time. The painting, which Lavinia signed and dated 1589, depicts "St Francis di Paola blessing a baby"³⁶.

³⁴The Ospedale della Morte nursed the sick with non contagious diseases. Its Confraternity would provide mourning services for executed prisoners. See Christopher Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.89-90, 195-6 and Nicholas Terpstra, "Death and Dying in Renaissance Confraternities" in *Crossing the Boundaries; Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, ed., Konrad Eisenbülcher (Kalamazoo, 1991), pp.179-200 and "Piety and Punishment; Lay Confraternities and Civic Justice in 16th Century Bologna in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 22, 4, 1991, p.679 *passim*.

³⁵All these names are to be found in the "Libro delle Congregazione", 1587-1599, 3 (73), Serie II, Atti di Congregazione, Archivio di S. Maria della Morte, ASB.

³⁶Masini (*Bologna, 1666*), p.209 and Malvasia (*Bologna, 1686*), p.221 cite Lavinia's painting as being in the Cappella Vizzani in the church of Santa Maria della

St Francis di Paola was the founder of the order of friars known as Minims in Paola, in Calabria³⁷. As a subject for altarpieces in Italy, his popularity grew considerably in the seventeenth-century. In sixteenth-century Rome, Elena Orsini decorated a chapel in the church of Trinità dei Monti, which belonged to the Minims, with paintings by Daniele da Volterra of scenes from this saint's life³⁸. Gregory XIII later commissioned a series of roundels on the same theme for the church's cloister.

Francis di Paola had the ability to perform miracles, which evidently included healing the sick and raising the dead. Significantly, in his native town, he had had particular success in removing the deformities of babies born monstrous. On the basis of his ability to heal the sick, he was invited by the ailing and superstitious Louis XI of France to attend him. However, the King died soon after Francesco di Paola's arrival in France, and the friar was taken up as a preacher and spiritual advisor by several women of the royal family - first by Anne of Brittany, and then by Louisa of Savoy. Louisa evidently credited the Saint with the safe delivery of her son, whom she named after him as a token of gratitude. The boy became Francis I. After Francis di Paola's death, it was customary for pregnant women at the French court to pray to him for the safe delivery of healthy children, and to name them Francis. Francis I's own wife, Claude, would also attribute the safe delivery of her own sons to Francis di Paola as

Morte. Given Giasone's relationship with the confraternity (and he is the only Vizzani mentioned in the record books for this time), it seems impossible that he was not the patron.

³⁷ Padre Giuseppe Roberti dei Minimi, *S. Francesco di Paola - storia della sua vita (1416-1507)*, (Rome, 1963).

³⁸See Carolyn Valone, "Elena Orsini, Daniele da Volterra and the Orsini Chapel" in *Artibus et Historiae*, 2, 1990, pp. 79-87.

well. Both she and Louisa of Savoy were instrumental in his canonisation.

Fontana scholars have debated whether the scene that Lavinia depicts represents Louisa of Savoy presenting the infant Francis I to Francis di Paola, or Claude of France. The Queen in Lavinia's picture is certainly not meant to be taken as an actual representation of a historical personage from the last hundred years, since she wears sandals and is dressed in a costume redolent of Raphael's St. Cecilia, one which Lavinia favoured for the costume of her "exotic", or biblical characters³⁹. As Cantaro points out, her pose is reminiscent of that of the Magdalen in Lavinia's 1581 "Noli me tangere" (Florence, Uffizi). The ladies-in-waiting behind her are dressed in more contemporary costume, which may be meant to be French in character. It seems unlikely that this painting is meant as the representation of an actual historical meeting between one of the French Queens and St. Francis di Paola. Rather, it is the action that is significant; the Queen kneeling in the votive, *grazia ricevuta* pose, holding out her healthy son to be blessed by Francis, who had protected this child while he was in the womb.

Why did Giasone Vizzani choose this unusual subject for his family altarpiece? Shortly before 1589, he married Hippolita Ludovisi, after the death of his first wife, Elena Bentivoglio. The painting would seem to be coincident with the birth of his son Costanzo. The Vizzani may well have prayed to Francis di Paola during Hippolita's pregnancy and vowed to erect an altarpiece to the Saint once she had been brought to bed of a healthy child. In this sense, their motivation for the commission is analogous to that

³⁹In this particular case, the Queen's bronze coloured tunic with its border of scenes in *gris aille* is very close to that worn by the main figure in Lavinia's "Sacrifice of a bull" (Imola, Pinacoteca Comunale) of 1592.

put forward by Julia Miller for the Portinari family's altarpiece⁴⁰.

As the subject of religious painting, Francis di Paola appeared infrequently in sixteenth-century Italy. However, Giasone Vizzani could have acquired an interest in his life from a number of quarters: A Bolognese Pope had commissioned scenes of the saint's life, ties between Bologna and Fontainebleau were strong and the first account of his life in Italian had been published in Turin in 1579. Furthermore, if Giasone did not actually call his son Francesco after the Saint, he arranged for him later in life to be connected with the family of Louise of Savoy. In 1602, Costanzo began his induction into the order of the *Cavallieri della Religione di Santi Maurizio e Lazzaro*, an order regulated by the Dukes of Savoy. He was made a knight when he obtained his majority in 1608⁴¹. While there may be other altarpieces that were erected as a votive offering of thanks in Bologna during this period for the safe delivery of a child, none are of such clearly pertinent subject matter as that by Lavinia Fontana for Giasone Vizzani.

Pictorial depiction of and parental investment in, children did not end after a mother was safely delivered of a healthy infant. Even if a son or daughter did live to adulthood, childhood was still fleeting. A record of infancy could become a treasured memento. The increase in children's portraiture in Northern Italy in the late sixteenth-century has been noted, but no satisfactory reason for its rise in popularity has been proffered. As a fashion, the taste for children's portraits may have initially been generated in the sixteenth-century by trends in Florence and Venice, such as Bronzino and his portraits of the Medici children, which would become a durable trend at the Florentine

⁴⁰cf *ut supra* note 31.

⁴¹See vol 90, *Eredità Vizzani*, Archivio del Orfanotrofio di S. Maria Maddalena e S. Onofrio, ASB.

court⁴². Titian's portrait of Clarissa Strozzi is considered as a landmark in the development of more "child-like" children's portraits⁴³. It has been suggested that humanism promoted a new valorisation in the sixteenth-century, one also fostered by an awareness of the fragility of infant life in a period of pestilence. Hence parents may have been concerned to record their child's image lest it should be taken from them⁴⁴.

The increase in pedagogical literature in late sixteenth-century Italy may also have contributed to the growth in children's portraiture. As parents read about suitable names for children, the best diet for a child, appropriate modes of behaviour for children, so might they began to conceptualise the identity and personality of their children in a new and more developed way⁴⁵. Such new perceptions could lead to a desire to capture in pictures the fleeting nature of childhood. Indeed, one work, written by the Augustinian

⁴²*I principi bambini, abbigliamento e infanzia nel Seicento*, ex. cat, ed. K. Aschengreen Piaconti (Florence, 1985), primarily provides a discussion of children's portraits at the Medici court in the late sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries.

⁴³See Luba Freedman, "Titian's portrait of Clarissa Strozzi: the State Portrait of a Child" in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 31, 1989, pp.165-190. Freedman offers a good overview of issues surrounding children's portraiture for this period.

⁴⁴ Such ideas are put forward by Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood; A Social History of Family Life* (New York, 1962).

⁴⁵Just as the majority of Italian conduct books for women are based on Vives' *Institutione della Foemina Christiana*, the model for Italian pedagogical works is Erasmus' work on childhood, translated into Italian as *Della Institutione de' fanciulli come di buon hora si debbono ammaestrare alle virtù et alle lettere* (Venice, 1545). Italian works based on Erasmus include the anonymous, *Operetta utile del costumare i fanciulli* (Modena, 1555), Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato sulli Fanciulli* (Milan, 1584). See also, Luigi Dardano, *La bella e dotta difesa delle donne in verso e prosa, con un breve trattato di ammaestrare i figliuoli* (Venice, 1554) and Giovan Bruto, *La Institutione di una Fanciulla Nobilmente Nata* (Antwerp, 1555), which was written in French and Italian. See also J.C. Margolin, "La 'civilité puérile' selon Érasme et Mathurin Cordier" in D. Bigalli, ed. *Ragione e "civilitas". Figure del vivere associato nella cultura del '500 europeo* (Milan, 1986), pp. 19-45.

Andrea da Volterra and published in Bologna in 1572, states that by bringing children up to be devout and God-fearing, parents make their children into "living portraits" of goodness that can be placed without reproach in front of God⁴⁶.

One might add that in Bologna an increase in portraits of children in the late sixteenth-century occurred at the same rate as a growth in ^{portraits} of adults, be they noblemen, and women, widows, scholars, or prelates. Parents, prepared to have themselves depicted according to their role or profession were apparently no less prepared to commission an image of their child.

There are eight children's portraits known still to exist by Lavinia Fontana and the majority are signed by her. Of those by her that are now lost, the one that sounds most intriguing is undoubtedly that described by Malvasia and Oretti in the Casali palace as depicting "Andrea Casali while still a boy with his sister, both held by the hand by a gardener, in the country"⁴⁷. The Casali family were a part of the Fontana patronage network. Andrea Casali died in 1604, apparently under ambiguous circumstances⁴⁸. He was the son of Mario Casali. Mario has previously been mentioned as standing as proxy for his brother Vincenzo, the Bishop of Massa, when he was named godfather to Lavinia's

⁴⁶Andrea da Volterra, *Discorso sopra la cura et diligenza che debbono havere i Padri et le Madri verso i loro Figlioli sia nella civiltà come nella pietà Christiana*, (Bologna, 1572), p.12 "Et saranno poi sempre conosciuti come vivi ritratti prima della bella imagine d'IDDIO".

⁴⁷"Andrea Casali ancor putto, con una sorella, ambi guidati per mano da un'Ortolano in paese". This wording appears in Malvasia (*Bologna, 1678*) and in Oretti (1760-1780).

⁴⁸Dolfi, (*Bologna, 1770/1990*), p.251, writes that some claim Andrea died at the battle of Ostend on July 19th, 1604, fighting the Dutch, while others believed him to have been taken prisoner by the Dutch, then freed by the "Padri del Risacatto", but later executed in Rome having been mistaken for someone else.

son, Severo in 1587⁴⁹. The description of this portrait suggests a desire on the part of *Mario* Casali and his wife, Barbara Malvezzi to capture their children for posterity in a rural idyll. Perhaps the painting depicted scenery surrounding their country villa. It is possible that their children were brought up outside plague-ridden Bologna in the healthier countryside and their parents wanted to keep a portrait of them in town which would remind them of how their children were benefitting from a pastoral setting.

As explained above, painting children was one of the first branches of portraiture explored by Lavinia Fontana⁵⁰. Her work would develop with subtle compositional and iconographic changes. Stylistically, her children's portraits occupy ground somewhere between Sofonisba Anguissola's pictures of children and those by Girolamo Mazzola Bedoli, who produced a large number of portraits of children at the Farnese court⁵¹. Anguissola's portraits of children, in particular those of her own family have an air of intimate familiarity - girls and boys laughing and grinning. Bedoli's portraits have an air of grand rhetoric, the children, lavishly and ornately dressed are usually surrounded by monumental antiquities. Fontana's portraits are never as informal as those of Anguissola

⁴⁹See above Chapter Three, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone", when Mario's connection with Ercole dall'Armis was mentioned. Dolfi (*Bologna, 1770*), p.251, describes Mario as a Senator and Knight of the Calatrava, as well as Captain of the Porta del Palazzo. He also served as Papal Ambassador to Rome and was married to Barbara Malvezzi.

⁵⁰See Chapter One, "The Making of a Woman Artist".

⁵¹Angela Ghirardi recently offered a survey of children's portraiture from this period, in the Emilia Romagna/Lombard area, "Exempla per l'iconografia dell'infanzia nel secondo Cinquecento Padano" in *Carrobbio*, 1994, pp.123-137. In this article, Ghirardi proposes two other childrens' portraits by Lavinia Fontana, one on p.130, of "a boy with a book" (Houston, Museum of Fine Arts) and on p.134, "Portrait of Brigida Righi with her wet nurse" (sold at Christies, February 14, 1975). These pictures look stylistically closer to Passerotti's style than they do to Lavinia's.

and they also avoid the staid, almost pompous "state portrait" iconography of Bedoli's pictures of Farnese court children which would have been unsuitable for the children of the Bolognese urban nobility.

Fontana children appear thoughtful, apparently reserved, often with an air of sweetness. Certainly this is apparent in the "Portrait of a small boy", one of Lavinia's first dated works, (fig.2)⁵². One can say the same of another comparable portrait, signed by Lavinia and dated 1583 (whereabouts unknown fig.58). This little boy is probably the same age, perhaps six or seven, and dressed in a similar fashion to his counterpart from 1575, in a doublet, tunic, cloak and ruff. He stands next to his pet dog, seated on a table, who places his paw on his master's arm. Both these children look quite solemnly at the viewer. There is in their faces perhaps something of a reflection of the men that their parents would like them to become; thoughtful, considered, upright, disciplined. Nonetheless, these are not cold children. The customary sensitivity of Lavinia's handling of her subjects renders them warm and loveable and they were doubtless beloved.

If there is any one portrait by Lavinia in which a child is depicted in something of a stately manner, it is the "Portrait of a baby in a crib" (fig.57). This picture was only recently given to Lavinia Fontana, but its attribution now seems unquestionable⁵³. It has been noted that compositionally it is not far removed from a genre that became popular in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century, of babies bound up in their swaddling

⁵²See Chapter 1, "The Making of a Woman Artist".

⁵³Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), pp.135-136, traces the picture's provenance and attribution. In the nineteenth-century, it was, at various points attributed to Barocci, Santi di Tito and even Leonardo da Vinci. Others posited Lavinia Fontana. Fortunati-Pietrantonio and Ghirardi concur. Cantaro proffers an acceptable date of around 1585 for its execution.

clothes. One example of this type is by Federico Barocci of *Federico of Urbino as a baby*, from 1605, another is by Tiberio Titi of Leopoldo de' Medici from 1617 (both in Florence, Galleria Palatina)⁵⁴. Earlier, in date and closer to Bologna in location is the portrait of an unknown child by an equally unknown Ferrarese artist⁵⁵. However, the construction of Lavinia's portrait is much more elaborate. The depiction of the child's crib is one of the few remaining illustrations from this period of the lavish furnishings wealthy parents could buy for their children⁵⁶. It is like a sepulchre with a baldachino, complete with columns, pilasters, engraved wood and is draped in fine linens. The child itself is covered up to its neck in lace. The child is a pretty and seemingly healthy baby, with a full head of hair, pink and white complexion and bright eyes which hold the viewer's gaze. The surrounding space and background enables the viewer to note that the crib has been placed in a large room with columns and a marble floor. Of particular interest are the figures in the background, now shadowy for want of cleaning. It is apparent that two women are bending over a chest by a window, a scene usually depicted in the background of womens' portraits. The presence of the chest is reminiscent of the *cassone* full of a bride's new clothes and allows the viewer to imagine that the trunk in this picture is full of linens and clothes for this child. The parents of this baby are clearly anxious to let the viewer of this portrait know that no expense has been spared in the maintenance of their child.

Another child painted while still little more than a baby is Ippolita Savignani

⁵⁴Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*) notes the similarity between these paintings

⁵⁵This picture is published by Ghirardi (*Carrobbio, 1994*) p.133.

⁵⁶Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior* (London, 1991), uses this picture as an illustration of children's cribs from this period.

(Hopetoun House, fig.59). In the picture, her initials and her age are inscribed on the plinth next to her, her age, twelve months and the picture's date, 1583⁵⁷. The portrait of this child from the Bolognese nobility was sold in the eighteenth-century as a picture by Lavinia Fontana and there seems no reason to dispute such a claim. It is a picture with a glossy finish, and its relatively diminutive dimensions, 40 x 25 cms. suggest it was designed to have an intimate relationship with its viewer. It was not intended to hang on a wall and be admired at a distance, one could actually hold it to look at and admire the child depicted. The sex of Ippolita, who still has a chubby baby's face, little hair and is dressed in a long green gown and green cocked hat, would be difficult to determine but for the fact that the little girl has already had her ears pierced. One arm is wrapped around her little dog, seated on the plinth next to her, apparently to prevent him from escaping. With her left hand, she clutches what is probably an amulet to ward off evil spirits and keep her safe.

One does not know if Ippolita's amulet helped her grow to adulthood, or if her portrait would eventually serve as a visual reminder to her parents of the child they had lost. The same year that Ippolita's portrait was painted, Lavinia Fontana painted a portrait of Antonia Ghini which she signed and dated and which would function as a reminder of her parents' loss (private coll. fig.60). Scilla Ghini was the wife of Vincenzo, the Professor of Medicine at the University in Bologna who had helped arrange the

⁵⁷Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.112 provides a history of the picture's provenance. It was acquired for the collection of Hopetoun House in the eighteenth-century, with Ippolita's identity established and attributed to Lavinia Fontana, whose name is written on the back of the picture, although for a period it was mistakenly given to Sofonisba Anguissola.

Fontana-Zappi marriage⁵⁸. Scilla was the godmother of Lavinia's daughter Laura, who was born at a quarter past six in the evening on Wednesday January 2, 1581⁵⁹. However, Laura only lived until five o'clock the following evening⁶⁰. About two months later, Antonia was born to Scilla Ghini, so that Lavinia and Scilla shared the experience of pregnancy concurrently.

Lavinia's portrait of Antonia shows a little auburn haired girl, posed, typically for the time, in the dress and the stance of an adult. An inscription painted on the side of the table on which Antonia leans informs the viewer that she is deceased. Antonia died on December 15th, 1583, at the age of two years and nine months. It seems likely that the Ghini then commissioned Lavinia to paint their little girl's picture as an effigy. The words painted on to the table cloth are analogous to an inscription carved on a tombstone. Antonia holds an orange - citrus fruit, with its bitter-sweet quality, which sometimes appears in portraits of the memento mori type⁶¹. The fact that the portrait is dated 1583, and Antonia died almost as the year was out, suggests that Antonia's parents decided very quickly after her death to have a painted record of her image.

Scilla and Vincenzo clearly felt the need to continue to see the image of their little girl, even though she had been taken from them. A great deal of historical writing has

⁵⁸See Chapter One, "The Making of a Woman Artist".

⁵⁹See Gian Paolo Zappi's *Libro del Battismo*, BCI. Laura's godfather was a "Signor Camillo Pelegrini Veronese" (and standing as proxy for him was "Sig. re Abate S.to Pietro").

⁶⁰A little note in the margin of Gian Paolo's entry for Laura's birth is marked with a cross and reads "*A ore 5 pasò di questa miglior vita la giobia notte*".

⁶¹See, for example, Bartolomeo Passerotti's portrait of a widow, with her son (n-law?) and his child (fig.42).

suggested parental indifference to the young child before the eighteenth century⁶². Yet in this portrait of Antonia it is hard to see any such indifference on the part of Scilla and Vincenzo. She was gone from them and her absence was greatly lamented⁶³.

For the children who did grow older, the pictorial emblems of childhood changed from fruit and flowers and little pet dogs. For example, one of Lavinia's lost children portraits, apparently signed and dated 1581, was described by Oretti as being in the Zini palace and it depicted "two children of the age of eight, holding several books at a table"⁶⁴. After the age of eight or nine, a flower was no longer a suitable device for a boy. He would be told to think of more than just his pet dog. His education and his tastes must be developed. Those portraits of older boys by Lavinia Fontana show them in a guise not dissimilar to those of portraits by her of Bolognese scholars, seated at desks, with books and writing materials.

In fact, one double portrait attributed to Lavinia, which probably dates from the early 1580s, shows what are in all likelihood, a father transmitting his scholarly gifts to his son (fig.61). The man is seated, dressed in scholastic-type fur-lined robes. In his hand he holds a drawing of a depiction of Laocoön - an image from antiquity connected with parenthood, although not the most felicitous one (given that father and sons were

⁶²This notion was advanced primarily by P. Ariès, (*New York, 1962*).

⁶³One might also examine Antonia's portrait in the light of letters written by some scholars in the fifteenth-century, when they had lost children. George McClure, "The Art of Mourning, Autobiographical Writings on the Loss of a Son" in *Sorrow and Consolation in Italian Humanism* (Princeton, 1991), pp.92-115, cites four humanists who wrote letters on the deaths of sons as a means of self-consolation.

⁶⁴Oretti (Bologna, 1760-1780), "*Casa Zini..Altro Quadro con due puttini ritratti in età d'anni 8. tengono alcuni libri in un tavolino, e vi si legge Lavinia Font. de Zappis, 1592*".

killed by snakes). This boy is standing next to his father and he places his hand on a book lying on the table. What this portrait implies is that through good guidance, this child will grow up to have as sophisticated and refined tastes as his father.

One studious adolescent, in a painting signed by Lavinia Fontana and dated 1581 could almost be the young boy from 1575, or at least a relative (fig.62). Dressed in the same sort of clothes as his younger counterparts, the youth is seated at a desk, turning the pages of a book. He looks up momentarily from his reading, but with a distracted air, as if desiring to return to his book. The portrait suggests perhaps a future Carlo Sigonio, or Francesco Panigarola, rather than a *cavaliere* and he may indeed be a younger son intended for a scholarly or ecclesiastical career.

A boy with a seemingly reluctant attitude towards study is to be found in a full-length portrait. This picture may be securely given to Lavinia Fontana, in part because of the portrait sketch of the same adolescent in the Uffizi collection of drawings (fig.63)⁶⁵. The boy stands in a large room at a desk furnished with all sorts of writing materials. However, he looks at the viewer pugnaciously rather than studiously and his expression is matched by a little pug dog who sits under the table. One wonders if he and Lavinia came to some sort of understanding about his personal characteristics as she sketched his portrait.

A sophisticated education based on humanist principles was of course reserved for boys from the middle and upper classes in Bologna and, perhaps, for a few fortunate girls.

It was, however, the ideal of Gabriele Paleotti that every child, regardless of class, should have access to a scriptural education and to a sound understanding of the principles of

⁶⁵This picture was exhibited in the Lavinia Fontana exhibition in 1994, but no reference was made to it in the catalogue.

Christianity. To this end, in the provision of religious teaching to the children of Bologna, text, spoken word and visual image came together.

Pedagogical writers often charged mothers with guiding and instructing children of either sex until they were seven years of age⁶⁶. In particular, they were to give them their first lessons in religious instruction, to teach them about the mysteries of faith, the purity and goodness of angelic spirits and holy saints and how to pray. As part of this teaching, they should instruct and encourage children to use religious images. Gabriele Paleotti, in his prescriptions on the rearing of children, advised parents that they should have as many holy pictures in the house as possible, so that they might more easily educate their young children in spiritual matters and they should ensure that every one of their children had a religious image in their room for saying prayers, for visual methods are the best way to encourage young minds ⁶⁷.

There is, in fact, a clear indication that the use of Lavinia's sleeping Christ Child pictures were not necessarily confined to pre-partum purposes. An analogy can be drawn between the iconography of Fontana's paintings, Paleotti's advice and the well-known description of suitable religious paintings for children written by Giovanni Dominicini, the popular Florentine pedagogue, two hundred years earlier. Dominicini suggests that while the babe is still in swaddling bands, his mother should show him pictures of the

⁶⁶Pompeo Vizzani, *Breve Trattato del Governo Famigilare* (Bologna, 1609). "Dell Officio della Madre di Famiglia verso i figliuoli" states that mothers should be responsible for children's education from the ages of three to seven. Vizzani acknowledges his text is extracted from Alessandro Piccolomini's *Institutioni Morali*.

⁶⁷Gabriele Paleotti, "Alcuni Avertimenti per li Padri e Madri di famiglia", (*Bologna, 1580*), pp.216-217.

baby Jesus, who can be painted as asleep⁶⁸. Jesus might be accompanied by John the Baptist, who should be represented as a young child, and dressed in camel's skin. It is with this infant John the Baptist that the baby should be taught to identify, so that he too can emulate and develop a close relationship with the Son of God. It was, therefore, a mother's responsibility to ensure that her children were made visually adept from an early age, so that they would be able to use religious paintings throughout their life. Paleotti had perhaps a precocious valorisation of maternal influence, something more readily associated with the nineteenth-century.

What of a child's religious education after infancy? One of the findings of the Council of Trent was children's woeful ignorance about scriptural and doctrinal matters, to the extent that many did not know how to make the sign of the cross, recite the Our Father, Hail Mary or the Creed. While the obligation of parents to ensure that their children were educated in such matters was emphasised, it was felt that a greater community effort should be made to educate children by the establishment of schools which met on a Sunday for the study of the Christian doctrine, "Scuole per La Dottrina Christiana"⁶⁹.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Gabriele Paleotti seized this opportunity to encourage the city to become involved in the education of its children. Furthermore, while other

⁶⁸Giovanni Dominicini, *Regola del governo di cura familiare* (1403, trans. Arthur Basil, *On the Education of Children*, Washington, 1927), p. 34.

⁶⁹These problems are summed up in a Papal bull, *Sommario dell'Indulgenze nuovamente concise da N.S. Papa Gregorio XIII all Congregatione della Dottrina Christiana della Città di Bologna e sua Diocesi, come appare nel Breve di Sua Santità*, "Raccolta Malvezzi Medici", Cart.197, f.12, Congregazione della Dottrina Christiana, BCB. For the Council of Trent decrees, the bull cites Section 24, Chapter 4.

cities simply concentrated on establishing such institutions for boys, Paleotti also initiated schools for girls. This was a logical step, as many of these Bolognese girls would grow up to be the mothers of other Bolognese citizens, responsible for their primary education, so their ignorance of scriptural matters was in many ways more dangerous than it would be that of their brothers. It was to these schools that he referred in several sermons when he encouraged wealthy Bolognese noblewomen to teach⁷⁰. In 1577, Paleotti published the "Ordine delle Scuole delle Putte che vanno ad imparare la Dottrina Christiana le Domeniche e Feste nella Città di Bologna"⁷¹. Each school, attached to a local church, was run by a *Priora*, a *Sottopriora*, *Maestra*, *Silentiera* and *Portinara*. Paleotti insisted that the *Priora* must be from a noble family⁷². While no records of the names of any *Priora* for the sixteenth-century exist, mid seventeenth-century records indicate that women from the Isolani, the Malvezzi, Caprara, Bentivoglio, Bonfioli, Bargellini and Vizzani families undertook this role⁷³.

There were twenty five girls to each class, six classes in all, each called after a Saint (Cecilia, Ursula, Agatha, Anastasia, Catherine and Agnes). Paleotti instructed that every girl who was unable to read should sit next to one who could. The girls would

⁷⁰Paleotti (*Bologna, 1580*), p.89 in his instruction for how women should spend their spare time: "*Il resto del giorno spendere in cose spirituali, come trovarsi nelle Scuole della Dottrina Christiana*".

⁷¹Gabriele Paleotti, "Ordine delle Putte che vanno ad imparare al Dottrina Christiana le Domeniche e feste nella Città di Bologna", (*Bologna, 1580*), p.16-20. He repeated this advice on page 242 of the same work.

⁷²*ut supra*, p.242.

⁷³ Raccolta Malvezzi Medici, Cart.197, f.12, "Congregazioni della Dottrina Christiana" contains a "Catalogo delle Ufficiali principali s'impiegano nell'Opera della Dottrina Christiana delle Fanciulle", from 1656 which includes women from these families.

enter their church, kneel at the high altar and hear an oration. They would then sit and the *Maestra* would hear them recite last week's lesson. She would then take a register and tell the *Piora* who had missed class. The Our Father and Hail Mary would be said by the girls and they would hear another Oration from the *Piora*. The choir would then sing and what came next is perhaps surprising. On the first and third Sundays in the month, one class would have a *disputà*, debates with another class, in which each would argue about theological debates, each girl putting forward three points. The *Maestra* ensured that every girl spoke clearly and precisely, to good effect. Paleotti clearly felt that it was not enough for each girl to know her prayers by rote, she must have a clear understanding of scriptural process and logic. In the battle against heresy and error, such understanding was critical. The child would one day be a wife and mother, a shaper in turn of an infant mind.

Of primary significance for this study, is that following their *disputà*, the girls were given "*piccoli immagini dei Santi*" - doubtless the same little prints that would later become known as "*Santini*". Hence, the words they had spoken were given visual form. These images clearly had a "reward factor", following as they did after a competitive debate⁷⁴. They also show Paleotti's insistence on making children understand that

⁷⁴While Gabriele Paleotti is no more specific about images and their uses within the context of the schools, his cousin, Alfonso Paleotti, who would also be an Archbishop of Bologna wrote more fully on the use of images in *Regole della Compagnia della Dottrina Christiana per le Scole delle Donne* (described as "Ristampate di Ordine di Mons. Illustriss. e Reverendiss. Alfonso Paleotti, Archivescovo di Bologna" by Vittorio Benacci, Bologna, 1608). Chapter 31 is headed "Del modo di eccitare le figliuole ad imparare la Dottrina Christiana" and it states that the girls should be rewarded for exhibiting one of three things; when they have shown themselves to have worked harder than their classmates, and shown a keen interest in the material, or when they have performed particularly well in the *disputà*. The greatest reward would go to those who had learnt all the aspects of doctrine and had always performed at a superior level in the disputes. The prizes were therefore of

scriptural word and image go hand in hand. One is also led to consider how, not only private devotional paintings, but religious paintings in public places would be viewed as having an educative value for the children of Bologna. The children who attended the schools in their parish church would be encouraged to look at the images represented in the altarpieces and to learn from them. For example, one "Scuola per le Putte" was held at the Jesuit church of Santa Lucia. Lavinia Fontana's "Crucifixion with the Women at the Foot of the Cross" would have been shown to the young girls to serve as an exemplum of women's relationship with Jesus Christ and, by that same example, it might help the Jesuits to ensure that another generation of Bolognese women would grow up to be as generous to them as their mothers and grandmothers had been.

Indeed, images were actually commissioned for the express purpose of helping to educate these young pupils. Such was the case with Ludovico Carracci's "Annunciation" of 1583-4. Gail Feigenbaum has demonstrated how this picture was hung in a room built by the Compagnia del SS. Sacramento in which young boys were taught the Christian doctrine⁷⁵. This picture's audience was mainly children, so it helps to explain why Carracci has depicted both Mary and the angel as no more than children themselves. Children identify with children and so the event would have been more comprehensible to the boys than "grown-up" versions of the same.

Lavinia Fontana's altarpiece, the *Birth of the Virgin*, signed by her and given a

three sorts, images of saints of "*poco prezzo*", then nicer ones, (prettier or larger than the first), alternatively a Corona or an Agnus Dei. The greatest prizes were either superior sorts of Corona or Agnus Dei, or else they could be pictures that were painted or framed.

⁷⁵Gail Feigenbaum "The Early History of Lodovico Carracci's 'Annunciation' Altarpiece", *Burlington Magazine*, 132, 1990, pp. 616-622.

date of around 1590 was apparently made for the Galli chapel in the church of San Biagio (fig.64)⁷⁶. While this church did not apparently offer doctrinal classes to children, Lavinia's painting was nonetheless, clearly conceived as a picture which would appeal to children and to little girls in particular. Pedagogical thought on the education of little girls started with the premise that girl children were born with maternal attributes. Each was an embryonic little woman. San Biagio was also Lavinia's own parish church, after her family moved from the Via Galliera. Gian Paolo Zappi describes their children Laudomia, born in 1588 and Prospero, born in 1589, as being born in this parish⁷⁷. This birth scene then, might have special meaning for Lavinia.

The Birth of the Virgin and the Birth of John the Baptist were popular images in Renaissance art. Artists usually chose to depict the scene in an identifiably contemporary interior, as did Ghirlandaio in the frescoes in the Tornabuoni Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, Andrea del Sarto in the "Birth of the Virgin" fresco in the atrium of Santissima Annunziata and Giulio Romano in his heavily copied print of the Birth of John the

⁷⁶ Masini (*Bologna*, 1666), p.136 describes Lavinia's painting as being in the Galli family chapel in the church of San Biagio. No information pertaining to that family has survived, so it is impossible to even speculate on the circumstances surrounding this commission. Malvasia (*Bologna*, 1686/1969), p.285 locates the painting in the "Ghelli Paleotti e Calderini" chapel. The painting was moved to the church of Santa Trinità after the Napoleonic suppression. See Cantaro (*Milan*, 1989), p.152.

⁷⁷Gian Paolo's entries in his *Libro di Battismo* for these two children read: "*Adi 29 Ottob. 1588 in sabb(o) notte a hore 8 mi nacque una figlio, et la feci bategiare Domenica adi 30 e li pose nome Laudomia il Compare fu m/Pier Francesco della Fava e la Comare la sig.ra Costanza moglie del sig.re Gio. Galeazzo Bargellini sotto la Capella di San Biagio in Cartellaria nova in casa delli Eredi Coralli presso detto S.to Biagio in Bologna*" and then: "*Adi 28 Dicembre 1589 in Giovedi notte a hore otto mi nacque un figliolo et lo feci batezzare Domenica adi 31 et li posi nome Prospero. fu compare il sig.r Raffaele Riarij et la Comare la Sig.ra Elisabetta moglie del sig.or Conte Julio Peñpoli sotto la Cappella di San Biagio in Cartelleria nova in Casa della Vedova Coralli.*"

Baptist. The same can be said for a painting close in location and similar in style to Lavinia's "Birth of the Virgin", an altarpiece of the same theme by Cesare Aretusi and Giovanni Battista Fiorini in San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna. However, all of these pictures have a rhetorical, processional and stately quality not to be found in Lavinia's painting. In these other works, there is a wider use of unemployed space, idle figures, men, (not included in Lavinia's picture) sit around or stand at the door and God the Father, or a cloud bank of angels have an obtrusive role.

Lavinia's painting presents a bustling domestic scene, every female in the picture has a task, either helping to wash and prepare the new born baby, or giving her mother a meal. Compositionally the figures spiral backwards, the viewer's gaze is lead in a diagonal towards the canopied bed in which the post partum St. Anne is lying. Significantly, the viewer's guide in this picture is the little girl in the foreground. She is the foremost figure in the painting and holding a swaddling band, she waits for an older girl and a woman to finish bathing the new born Mary. It is her gaze that meets the viewer's. Like the Infant John the Baptist in one of Lavinia's earliest paintings, her head is turned towards the viewer, her body turned in the direction of her companions. She leads the audience in and it is as if the excitement and the magic of the scene is viewed through her eyes. A little girl looking at this painting especially has a figure with whom she can identify and could see that someone her age plays a part in this very special event. Nor is it difficult to imagine a parent pointing out aspects of the picture that would particularly appeal to children, such as the little dog and cat playing together in the left hand corner, or a cherub swinging on the bed canopy . It is a picture quite deliberately designed to enchant. It is a nocturnal scene, close in style to work by the Bassano and its glowing red and green colours would burst into life when lit by the

chapel's candles⁷⁸. These candles would themselves replicate those held by several of the figures in the picture. This would enhance the intimate theatricality of the scene, turning it into a *tableau vivant* and making it difficult for a viewer of any age to know where their world ended and this intimate scene of female domesticity began.

While many parents might pray to be blessed with children, the number of foundlings and orphans was increasing in the late sixteenth-century, due in part to the severe outbreaks of plague. Bologna had a number of orphanages, such as the Ospedale dei Bastardini, some exclusively for boys such as the Orfanotrofio di San Bartolommeo and San Gioseffo, some for girls, Santa Maria Maddalena and Santa Maria del Barraccano. These were in part supported by donations from Bolognese citizens and an examination of wills left by the Bolognese nobility indicates that it was increasingly popular to leave money and legacies to orphanages. Some individuals were especially generous, such as the philanthropic merchant, Bonifazio della Balle, who actually founded a home for the daughters of prostitutes, the Putte di Santa Croce⁷⁹.

Paintings also played a role in philanthropy directed at orphaned children. Chapter three examined the gifts of religious paintings left by Ginevra Zampieri to the Putte di Santa Maria del Baraccano and by Flaminia Vittini to the Putte della Vergine nelle Lame⁸⁰. Bonifazio delle Balle had himself painted with a group ^{of} girls from the orphanage

⁷⁸Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), pp.152-153 cites as other nocturnal precedents in Bologna for Lavinia's painting; Luca Cambiaso's *Adoration of the Shepherds*, executed between 1565 and 1570 for the Casali family chapel in San Domenico and Camillo Procaccini's painting of the same subject of around 1584 now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna.

⁷⁹Rodolfo Vitori, "La pietà di un mercante bolognese del tardo Cinquecento. Bonifacio dalle Balle e le putte di Santa Croce" in *Carrobbio*, 13, 1987, pp.428-349.

⁸⁰See Chapter Three, *Gentildame and Honeste Matrone*.

that he founded, all of them kneeling in prayer with their hands folded. It seems that the first altarpiece with which Lavinia Fontana was ever involved was for the chapel of the Conservatorio delle Putte di Santa Marta.

The Conservatorio delle Putte di Santa Marta was not, in the strictest sense, an orphanage. It took in girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen who were deemed to be at risk, probably living on the streets, either working, or on the verge of working as prostitutes⁸¹. As Ottavia Niccoli demonstrates, child prostitution of either sex was rife in Bologna and then, as now, it was sometimes those who should be protecting children who were responsible for molesting them⁸². The aim of the Putte di Santa Marta was to take adolescent girls, described as "pretty but also flashy", educate them a little, teach them to sew and then to provide them with a small dowry which would either allow them to marry or to enter a convent⁸³.

The Conservatorio was founded in 1505 by Carlo Duosi who appointed twelve governors for its administration. In 1554, it was placed under the government of the charitable initiative, the Poveri Vergognosi who instructed that the twelve governors

⁸¹For the history and purpose of the Conservatorio delle Putte di Santa Marta, see, *Il Conservatorio di Santa Marta* (Bologna, 1933), *Arte e Pietà. I patrimoni culturali delle Opere Pie* ex.cat (Bologna, 1980), Christopher Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.82-84, A. Stanzani, *Santa Marta. Il restauro. Intelligenza e progetto* (Bologna, 1990).

⁸²Ottavia Niccoli, *Il seme della violenza: putti, fanciulli e mammoli nell'Italia tra Cinque e Seicento* (Bari, 1995), p.xix. She quotes two cases from criminal records in Bologna, concerning two children, a ten year old boy and nine year old girl who were found in bed with priests.

⁸³The girls were described as being "belle anzi vistose", literally meaning "Beautiful as well as flashy", suggesting that they were perhaps precociously provocative; from the *Statuti dell'Opera Pia dei Vergognosi e Conservatorio di Santa Marta*, 74, busta II, n.15, p.31, BUB, quoted in *Splendori della Vergogna*, ex. cat (Bologna, Milan, 1995), p.212.

should appoint twelve governesses who would be the most closely involved with its day to day running and care of the girls and their needs⁸⁴. As discussed above, Paleotti encouraged Bolognese noblewomen to take an active interest in the Putte di Santa Marta⁸⁵. It seems likely that it was these twelve governesses who were responsible for the purchase of an altarpiece for the chapel of the Conservatorio. Around 1580 they chose Lavinia and her father to paint an altarpiece of "Christ in the House of Martha and Mary" (*Opera dei poveri Vergognosi*, fig.65).

Marcello Oretti was the first to document this picture, describing it as Lavinia's work, but that a "gran dilettante di pittura", Francesco Ragazzini, deemed that Prospero had a hand in its production⁸⁶. Prospero Fontana's intervention is acknowledged by Fortunati-Pietrantonio, who believes that the father was responsible for executing the architectural background, and the male figures in the painting⁸⁷. The marbled floor pattern is one particularly common to works by Lavinia and there is little doubt that Lavinia was responsible for painting the two women, Martha and Mary. Given the location of the altarpiece and its audience, it is these two figures who are the significant aspect of this picture.

Saint Martha, the domesticated sister, was promoted as a model to whom all could aspire. Martha was always virtuous, her hard work and industry were exemplary, and the conservatory in Bologna, as were its counterparts in other Italian cities, was named

⁸⁴Stanzani (*Bologna*, 1980), pp.16-19.

⁸⁵Paleotti (*Bologna*, 1580).

⁸⁶Oretti, ms. B124 BCB.

⁸⁷Fortunati Pietrantonio, (*Bologna*, 1986) vol II, p. 729.

after her. But in this painting, Mary occupies the central foreground of the painting. Her head is framed by the gestures made by Christ and her sister, and the viewer's gaze is drawn to the rapt gaze of Mary upon Christ. Iconographically, this is unusual - the most prominent position is usually reserved for Christ in these pictures. However, for the young girls in the conservatory, Mary would have been a figure who offered them hope. She too, as told in the account of her life in Jacobus de Voraigne's *Golden Legend*, (the first printed edition appeared in 1476), had been through her parentless state, "at risk", and had fallen into ways of sin.* She too had been a beauty, but also described as wild and showy. However, she repented, (her pot with its lid clamped down, indicating that her sexuality is now controlled, is by her side in this picture) and came to be favoured by Christ. It would seem that a deliberate attempt has been made in the rendering of Mary in this picture to elicit a personal response from the young girls viewing her in the church. Mary here is shown as a young girl, no more than a teenager, the same age as most of the girls in the conservatory, and she is decidedly younger than her sister. Those who had commissioned the painting may have thought that a Mary represented in this manner, and placed central stage in the picture, would be the most effective pictorial device for encouraging the young girls to follow her example and listen to the word of God. The picture, is therefore, a thoughtful purchase in its choice of subject and execution. In fact, this picture came to have a practical, as well as a spiritual value for the Putte. Samples of needlework from the Conservatorio indicate that the girls were set to practise their embroidery by copying the picture in their chapel⁸⁸.

The final picture by Lavinia Fontana directed at children to be studied here is the

⁸⁸*Splendori della Vergogna* (Bologna, 1995), p.212.

* Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, (New York, 1941)

"Consecration of the Virgin" (Marseilles, Musée des Beaux Arts, fig.66). This picture, signed by Lavinia Fontana, bears a date in Roman numerals that is usually read as 1599, although the last letter is indecipherable and the date may be 1591 or 92⁸⁹. Cavazzoni, Masini and Malvasia indicate that this painting hung in the Gnetti family chapel in the church of Santa Maria dei Servi. The Virgin's consecration into heaven takes place at the top of the picture, but there is much below to hold the viewer's attention: Sts. Agnes and Elena kneel in front of the Virgin and St. Elena points with her finger, drawing the Virgin's attention to the figures below them; two small boys, dressed alike in contemporary clothes are handed a key by St. Donnino, while nearest to the viewer, the figure of St. Pier Crisologo pours oil onto a plate, presumably to anoint the heads of the two girls, a little older than the boys and also dressed alike who are kneeling in front of him.

This painting is, in effect, the Gnetti children's altarpiece. Nor was it the only religious painting produced by Lavinia Fontana in which actual children were depicted. Oretti describes a now lost altarpiece by Lavinia in the chapel of the Fibbia Fabri palace, of the Virgin mourning the dead Christ, accompanied by "four children, portraits of members of the Fibbia Family, dressed in clothes in use at that time"⁹⁰. However, this picture was clearly intended for private family worship, while the Gnetti altarpiece was destined for public display, in one of Bologna's largest churches, patronised by most of

⁸⁹Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.193 and Fortunati-Pietrantonio ed. (*Bologna/Milan, 1994*) p.191

⁹⁰Oretti, Ms B124, BCB "Casa Fibbia, cioè Fabbri, una tavolina nell'altare di una Cappella con la Vergine addorata il Signore morto, quattro putti vestiti all' uso di tempo, ritratti della Famiglia Fabbri". In Oretti, Ms B104, BCB, what is probably the same picture is listed as "Pietà con quattro puttini ritratti".

the great families who lived upon the Strada Maggiore.

Ottavia Niccoli is correct when she cites Lavinia's painting for the Gnetti family as a pictorial example of a new emphasis on children's prayer and devotion⁹¹. Prayer, as demonstrated by the little girls kneeling with joined hands, will provide them with the key to the kingdom of heaven, being proffered by St. Donnino to the two boys and the intercession of the Saints, as denoted by the pointing gesture of St. Elena as she kneels in front of the Virgin. What is especially interesting is what an active part the children play in the painting's narrative. They are not simply donor figures, they are both the viewer's guides and role models on a route map to heaven. Given that children's schools of Christian doctrine took place in Santa Maria dei Servi, one can see how this picture would be especially useful when these classes met.

However, this altarpiece must have had a special meaning for the Gnetti family members themselves. It was a very positive choice on the part of a parent to ensure that the presence of their children was transmitted to posterity in Santa Maria dei Servi and leads one to ask who the parents were and what informed their choice? A partial identity of the Gnetti family, whose last descendant died in 1669 has emerged. The family's relationship with Bologna suggests that the Gnetti may have felt the need^{to} establish a public identity in the city that could combine piety and a sense of dynasty.

The Gnetti were only quite recently arrived in Bologna. In the late sixteenth-century, there were two families, headed by two brothers, Annibale and Girolamo. Their father Cesare was himself born in Lianso and he moved to Castel S. Pietro Bolognese, half way between Bologna and Imola (which might explain the presence in the family

⁹¹Niccoli (*Bari* ., 1995), p.136.

altarpiece of one of Imola's protectors, San Pier Crisologo)⁹². Presumably Gnetti family wealth came from the fertile farmland surrounding Castel S. Pietro and it was sufficient to buy them influence and office in Bologna. In 1590, Annibale Gnetti served as a gonfalonier alongside Camillo Gozzadini⁹³. In 1595, Annibale died on a visit to Rome in Camillo Gozzadini's house⁹⁴.

This connection with the Gozzadini would seem to be important for the conception of their family altarpiece. The Gozzadini were, after all, one of the most established families in Bologna while the Gnetti were new arrivals. Santa Maria dei Servi was Ulisse Gozzadini's family's parish church and everyone could still see the depiction of Ulisse Gozzadini worshipping there as the donor in his altarpiece. Would it not seem appropriate to the Gnetti to establish a chapel in Santa Maria dei Servi as well? The Gnetti families also doubtless visited Camillo and Laudomia and were surely impressed by Lavinia's portrait of the Gozzadini family. When it came to choosing a painter for their family altarpiece, they would surely want the one so endorsed by their neighbour.

Certain difficulties do arise in re-creating the circumstances of the commission. There is no documentation available to indicate if both, or if only one, of the Gnetti brothers had children, or to whom they were married. Furthermore, Annibale Gnetti died in 1595 and his brother Girolamo died in 1597. The date of Lavinia's altarpiece has been read as 1599. One can therefore, put forward a number of hypothetical circumstances for

⁹²Valerio Rinieri, *Diario delle cose più notabili* Ms 434, BUB, vol II entry for April 3, 1597.

⁹³Ghiselli, *Memori Antiche*, Ms 770m BUB, vol XVIII, p.785.

⁹⁴See the entry for November 11, 1595 in Camillo Gozzadini's *Libro di ricordi*, Archivio Gozzadini, vol 1, BCB.

the commission: the first is that the date of the picture is actually 1591 and that one, or both of the brothers supervised the commission. The children could belong to one, or both of them. Alternatively, the painting was commissioned by the children's mothers following the death(s) of their father(s) , in which case, its message would very deliberately be that the Gnetti family dynasty would live on in Bologna. This was one case in which children would survive their father and their mothers would ensure their pious upbringing.

From this analysis, one can see how Lavinia Fontana's work encompasses a broad range of paintings depicting or directed at children, from the moment when they were first conceived, up until they were on the brink of adulthood. It confirms how crucial a stage childhood was held to be in Counter-Reformation Bologna. Children were the lifeblood of the city, its next generation, and needed to be taught to be pious and disciplined with due respect to their years. There were those children who needed to be succoured by their city. If they were running wild, they must be tamed in order to ensure that they would grow up to be responsible citizens. There were those cherished and adored by mothers and fathers as the means of ensuring that a family would continue, or simply because they were a part of that family in their flesh and blood. Lavinia Fontana's work reflects and encapsulates the challenges that the child, rich, poor, orphaned or surrounded by family, posed to a Counter-Reformation family and to the wider community, rent by pestilence and scarcity. Furthermore, Lavinia, eleven times a mother herself, was in a very special position to understand the pictorial needs of parents and custodians and to supply them to their satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

In 1604, Lavinia Fontana, along with her husband, her octogenarian mother and her four surviving children left Bologna for Rome. She was never to return. She had been invited to move there in 1600 by Girolamo Bernerio, Cardinal d'Ascoli, for whom between 1598 and 1599 she had painted the *Vision of St. Hyacinth* for his chapel in the church of Santa Sabina in Rome¹. The letter sent to Lavinia by his secretary, Rosato Rosati, indicates that Gian Paolo Zappi was very much involved in negotiations for his wife to establish herself in Rome and it may have been he, rather than his wife, who was particularly enthusiastic about such a move. The couple had been bound by the marriage contract drawn up by Prospero Fontana insisting they remain in Bologna during his lifetime (he had died in 1596) and they had acted in accordance with these stipulations, waiting until after his death to contemplate the move to Rome². When they did go, they took Lavinia's mother, Antonia de Bonardis, with them, just as the marriage contract of twenty seven years ago had insisted they must.

The world of Rome was very different from that of Bologna. It was directed by male family networks ensconced in the Vatican and almost all the patrons who can at present be associated with Lavinia during the ten years she lived there before her death, were connected with the Vatican. She continued to be associated with Cardinal d'Ascoli; she lived in the

¹See Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), pp. 194-195. The documents related to this work and its role in moving Lavinia to Rome are published both by Galli, (*Imola, 1940*) pp.81-85 and Cantaro, (*Milan, 1989*) pp.310-312. I have not discussed this painting as although made in Bologna, it falls outside the Bolognese sphere. The altarpiece and the circumstances surrounding its commission will form the opening of what I envisage to be the follow-up volume to this thesis on the Roman life of Lavinia Fontana.

²As discussed in Chapter 1, "The Making of a Woman Artist"

palace of Cardinal d'Este for a time and the Borghese family, Pope Paul V and his nephew Scipione were also among her patrons³. Clearly there were Bolognese networks and spheres of influence which were of assistance in establishing her, but there is much that at present remains unknown about her circumstances and there are some mysteries, such as why did Alberto de Rossi, head of the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome, when he wrote to her son Flaminio in 1633, describe Lavinia as his *patrona et maestra*. Did this mean that she offered help and instruction to aspiring painters in Rome⁴? What was her role in the masculine environment of the Vatican court and what were the benefits to her family?

What one can say from the known evidence is that it was a time of great personal hardship for Lavinia. Giulio Mancini, the Vatican physician turned art writer states that the death of her fourteen-year old daughter, Laudomia, left Lavinia devastated and that she never really recovered from her grief⁵. Given that Laudomia died in 1605, the last nine years of Lavinia's life must have been spent in great mental anguish, as well as physical pain. In a letter dated 1609, she wrote of her "broken hands", suggesting that she was perhaps arthritic⁶. She continued to work up to her death in 1614.

³Cardinal d'Ascoli was also involved in the commission for Lavinia's painting of the *Stoning of St. Stephen* for the church of San Paolo fuori le Mura. See the document published by Galli (*Imola, 1940*), p.118 and Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), p.312. She and her family were housed in Cardinal d'Este's palace during this period, Galli p.31 and Cantaro, p.313. Documents relating to her relationship with the Borghese family are published by Cantaro pp.314 and 318.

⁴Alberto de Rossi wrote this letter requesting that Lavinia's sons send him a portrait of her and one of her father for the *Accademia di San Luca*. The letter is printed in Galli (*Imola, 1940*), p.125 and Cantaro (*Milan, 1989*), pp.317-318.

⁵Mancini (*1620, Rome, 1956-57*), p.235.

⁶Lavinia wrote this in a letter to Carlo Ferrante in Cremona. See Cantaro, (*Milan, 1989*), p.314.

The study of Lavinia Fontana's career in Rome transcends the purpose and scope of this thesis. Lavinia Fontana entered a new society and embraced new opportunities. Even if there were linkages with Bologna, the conditions and carefully constructed networks upon which her career rested were changed and a study of her in her new context demands a knowledge of a very different set of documents. The purpose here has been to assess the degree to which the painter was integrated within her Bolognese society, with both individuals and groups. In focusing upon that part of her career, one gains access to the social and cultural history of Bologna in the period and can discern the scope of opportunities for public and private works. One can observe how patronage was structured within the city, in terms of both family networks and those reaching beyond Bologna, generated by the demands of scholars in the Republic of Letters. The richness and diversity of Lavinia's career also shows how, as a woman painter, she worked for this network and made the system work for her. She was aided by her father who helped establish his daughter as an artist and negotiated her early career and by a husband who was both bound by a legal document to promote her career and dependent on the earning power of his wife from the beginning of their marriage. She enjoyed the patronage of the Archbishop and was able to prove herself to be an exemplary Counter Reformation artist, producing religious works in accordance with reformed teaching of impeccable spiritual value and it is fair to say that her contribution to the art of the Catholic Reformation in Bologna has been too summarily dismissed or under-valued. Her own intelligence and scholarly demeanour, as evinced by her correspondence and the recognition given by a doctorate from the University and her ability to interact with the scholarly community and to be prized by them confirmed her standing in the city

Most importantly of all, she was appropriated by the Bolognese female nobility and

she catered to all of their artistic needs and those of their families. Her special skills in the rendering of valuable textiles, remarked on by Bumaldo, one of the first chroniclers of painters of her generation, endeared her to this body of patrons as did her ability to endow her sitters with grace and intelligence⁷. Lavinia's own personal skills in the development of close relationships with a noble clientele cannot be under-estimated. Indeed her success in this direction, so conspicuous in her lifetime, has created problems for those seeking to appreciate the full extent of her work. For when the families for whom she worked died out or fell on hard times, their painting collections were sold all over Europe⁸. Paintings attributable to her are still emerging and there are doubtless more still to be discovered.

What is the legacy of Lavinia Fontana? The reply is multi-faceted. It has been the aim of this thesis to demonstrate that her work permits through its very diversity an understanding of the tastes and desires of the society in which she lived. If one cannot ascribe a "school" to her, either in a stylistic or physical sense, sources indicate that there were at least two male painters who felt she played a role in their own emergence as artists. These were Alberto de Rossi mentioned above and Alessandro Tiarini, who apparently spoke of her to Malvasia in loving terms, declaring that, but for her intervention with his aunt, he would have been made to be a priest.⁹ Lavinia may also have been responsible for teaching young noble girls to paint. There is the reference to the portrait of a Capuchin in the church of San Giovanni in Monte by her Gozzadini *allieva*; and Caterina Pepoli, daughter of

⁷Bumaldo (*Bologna, 1641*), p.257.

⁸For example, the Gozzadini family died out with Giovanni Gozzadini in 1910 and the family property was sold at auction.

⁹Tiarini's devotion to Lavinia was discussed in Chapter 1, "The Making of a Woman Artist".

Elisabetta Pepoli, a godmother to a Fontana child, is listed as one of the *pittrice Bolognese* in Gaetano Giordano's nineteenth-century list¹⁰. Perhaps Lavinia instructed her as well. She never established the sort of school for women artists that Elisabetta Sirani ran for a period of her brief life, but her success was surely a model to which the quite numerous women painters of seventeenth-century Bologna aspired. Lavinia Fontana was, after all, the first to prove that women could gain, not only recognition as a painter, but the kind of worldly success that had previously been the sole territory of men and she did so uncloistered within convent walls, or bound by the environs of a court. That she did so while fulfilling her "duties" as a wife and mother makes her all the more extraordinary.

The most fitting way perhaps, to conclude this examination of her life and work in Bologna, is to gather together the testimonials to her worth and character provided by her contemporaries. In 1577, Orazio Sammachini predicted to Severo Zappi that were she to live a few years she would make a great profit from her art and his prophecy was to prove correct. In 1585, Fra Filippo Barbieri, anxious to recommend Lavinia's services to Bianca Capello, wrote to the Medici Duchess announcing that a "new Apelles had arrived in the form of a gracious young woman called Fontana"¹¹. In 1586, Laudomia Gozzadini, a victim of family corruption, declared that "Lavinia Fontana the famous painter" was "*onesta in omne*" and Laudomia continued to endorse her in the series of wills that she wrote through the 1580s¹². In 1588, Girolamo Mercuriale described her an "excellent painter who prevails

¹⁰ For the Gozzadini pupil, see Chapter 4, "Laudomia Gozzadini and her family portrait", for Caterina Pepoli, Gaetano Giordani, (*Bologna, 1832*), p.12.

¹¹ See appendix for transcription of this document.

¹² See Chapter 4, "Laudomia Gozzadini and her Family Portrait". The translation of "*onesta*" into English poses problems: it implies that she is honourable, trustworthy, faithful to commitments, and properly fulfilling the obligations of her status (in this

beyond the condition of her sex"¹³. Federico Zuccaro, in his little book of the travels he made around Northern Italy in the 1590s, thanked her in the acknowledgements as his "dear friend, the rare and excellent Lavinia Fontana - *Pittore Singolare*"¹⁴. Finally, Lavinia was to be recognised by her city as a symbol of what was special about Bologna. For the noble academician Ridolfo Campeggi, she was a "true ornament of our time"¹⁵. She was as "rare as the phoenix" to Giulio Cesare Croce and Lucio Faberio, in his funeral oration for Agostino Carracci assured his listeners that Lavinia Fontana would eternally be ~~kept~~ ^{reaped} with praise by Bologna¹⁶. However, the greatest confirmation of Lavinia's place in Bologna is provided by Francesco Galliani¹⁷. For him, the highlight of 1594 was clearly the unveiling of Gabriele Paleotti's chapel and while it contained a number of paintings dedicated to the life of the Virgin Mary by "various excellent Painters" there was only one altarpiece and that was by the hand of "the magnificent and most virtuous and beautiful Lavinia Fontana". Galliani, committed by his own admission to recording events he believed significant for Bologna, recognised, unwittingly or not, that Gabriele Paleotti's chapel was not only a monument made by an Archbishop whose commitment to his city was unsurpassed in Bolognese history, but that it had, as its focal point, a work made by a creation of Bologna unique to that city, the first truly successful, professional woman painter.

case as a painter).

¹³See Chapter 2, "Painting for the Illustrious Man".

¹⁴See Chapter 3, "Gentildame and Honeste Matrone".

¹⁵Ridolfo Campeggi, "Lavinia Fontana", *Rime* (Parma, 1608), pp.24-25.

¹⁶Giulio Cesare Croce's praise of Lavinia Fontana, is discussed in Chapter 2, "Painting for the Illustrious Man" and Faberio's funeral oration in the introduction.

¹⁷As discussed in Chapter 2, "Painting for the Illustrious Man".

Appendix of Documents

This thesis drew upon testaments and property inventories found in *Istrumenti* detailed in the primary sources. Some 122 were found for the period 1590-1623 (so the earliest refer to the possessions of a generation older than Lavinia Fontana). However, they vary considerably in detail and so make precise quantification impossible. Nonetheless, in these three decades changes can be discerned. In the 1590s the members of the generation then dying who left pictures were exceptional: by the 1620s, possession of paintings was almost a standard feature and the genres had multiplied, though the names of artists were still rarely given. What follows are examples extracted from inventories permitting a qualitative appreciation of developments.

From Archivio Fantuzzi-Ceretoli. *Istrumenti Fantuzzi-Ceretoli* vol 41, No 50, ASB.
12 February, 1590. "Inventario Legale fatta di Paola Burzani Griffoni dell'Eredità di Matteo Griffoni.

Un quadretto della Nonciata cornisato di noce in pittura. Una pittura in olio della fuga. Un quadretto con l'immagine di Iobia. Un quadretto di Donna di Parto.

Istrumenti Fantuzzi-Ceretoli vol 42, No 45.

October 8, 1591. Inventario Legale dell' Eredità di Gio: Alberto Limi.

Un quadro con l' immagine di Gio. Battista. Una Ancona Vecchia con l'immagine della Madonna. Un quadro con il ritratto di Cleopatra. Un quadretto della Anontiatà.

Istrumenti Fantuzzi-Ceretoli 43, No 54.

July 30, 1593. Inventario fatta di Verde Muzzoli Burzani, tutrice di Ludovico Griffoni:

Uno quadretto della Annonciata dipinto. Uno quadretto con l'immagine di Iobia. Un ritratto di Mattheo Griffoni vecchio. Un quadretto in pittura con l'immagine di S. Orsola. Un immagine del Signor che porta la Croce con altre figure. Un immagine della Madonna con il puttino.

From Archivio Bianchini-Paselli in Archivio Montanari Bianchini, Istrumenti 23, No 18 ASB.
9 October, 1595. Inventario Legale dell'Eredità di Laura Calderini Paselli.

Nella Camera dove morse la Sig. Laura:

Una Ancona dipinta dorata. Un quadrettino con la testa della Madonna dipinta in rame.

Un quadretto della Passione. Un quadretto cornisato con l'immagine della Madonna.

Nella Camera in capo della scala

Un quadretto da letto con una Pietà. Un quadro del Rosario in carta. Un Immagine della Madonna, duoi Angelli preda.

From Archivio Marescotti. Istrumenti 3, No 2, ASB.

20 June, 1595: "Inventario dell'Eredità del fu Vincenzo Salimbeni fatta di Francesco Salimbeni suo figlio"

Ritratto di detto Sig. Vincenzo. Un quadro di tela non cornisato dovè la Madonna va in Egitto. Un S. Francesco cornisato. Una Madonna dal letto. Un Altaro d'una Madonna. Un quadretto dipinto con la Trinità cornisato vecchio. Un quadrettino d'una Pietà piccolo.

From Archivio Ranuzzi. Istrumenti 11, No 15, ASB.

31 May, 1596. Invenatrium hereditario di Co; Girolamo Ranuzzi Mangioli

Un ritratto della Signora Contessa della Mirandola in formo piccolo. Un quadro grande di pittura con l'immagine della Madonna, di Nostro Signro, di S. Gio puttino et S. Gioseffo vecchio. Un quadrettino piccolo con la figura del Nostro Signor cornisato di legno finto perfilato d'oro con un agnus dei attaccato presso il letto. Un quadro grande con il Ritratto di Papa Gregorio XIII. Un altro quadro grande col Ritratto del Sign. Co: Girolamo. Un altro quadretto con la figura della Mafonna in tela. Un altro quadretto in tela con la figura del Signor orante nell'orto. Un quadretto di legno con la figura di S. Girolamo. Un quadretto cornisato con la figura di Nostro Signor coronate di Spino.

From Archivio Malvezzi Lupari, Istrumenti vol 12, ASB

29 March, 1603. Inventario dei beni mobili di Marchese Pirro Malvezzi

Un quadro di pittura con un S. Fraancesco grande. Un quadro di pittura con un retratto del Sig. Ercole Malvezzi. Un quadro della Madonna all'antica. Un quadro di pittura fatto per il Bassano. Un quadro di pittura con l'Immagine della Madonna della Rosa. Un quadro di pittura retratto di Carlo Quinto Imperatore.

Un quadro di pittura retratto de Venere in piedi. Un quadro di pittura retratto d'un puttino.

Un quadro grande di pittura con il Retratto di Cacciatori e Cani. Un quadro di pittura retratto une Leda, et altre diverse figure. Due quadri di pittura retratto duoi Staggione dell'anno. Un quadro di pittura retratto del Stato de Milano. Un quadro di pittura di mapamonde. Un quadro di pittura con il retratto del Cardinale Borromeo. Un quadro di

pittura con il Retratto di S. Francesco. Diciassette quadri di pittura compagni con li retratti delli Illmi Signori Malvezzi.

Quadretti di pittura; un di S. Francesco e due di Madonna. Un quadro di pittura con una Madonna e un San Giovanni. Dieci quadri di pittura della casa d'Austria. Sei quadri di pittura con retratti de Cani. Due quadri di pittura del Bassano. Un quadro di pittura retratto tre Dei grandi. Quattro quadri di pittura delle Stagione dell'anno. Un quadro di pittura vecchio. Un quadro di retratto con una donna nuda. Un quadro cornisato con il retratto del Sig. Marchese e Sig. Lucio suo fratello. Una pittura di Madonna con il Signore in braccio. Uno di San Francesco di Paolo. Una pittura di S. Francesco. Una Imagine di nostro signore in tela coronate di spine. Una Pittura della Madonna piccola cornisato d'argento con recami di perl e e veluto cremesino.

From Archivio Malvezi-Lupari, Istrumenti (Serie II) 25, No 50, ASB.

October 1, 1604. Inventarium Legale Bonorum olim Ill. Senat. Laurenti Magnani

Un ritratto della buon memoria di S. Lorenzo. Un quadro di pittura di Papa Urbano.

Due quadri di pittura che sono duoi paesi. Una Madonna in quadretto di pittura. Un quadro di pittura con l'Immagine della Beata Vergine di buonissimo mano ma antico.

Nel Stanzo di letto posta al Cappello

Un quadro di pittura con l'immagine del Nostro Singor. Un quadro di pittura con una Venere.

From Archivio Malvezzi-Lupari, Istrumenti (Serie II) 25, No 109, ASB

28 November, 1615, Inventario Legale della'Eredità di Pietro Magnani

Un quadro grande di un homo ritratto vive. Un quadro di una donna ritratta vive. Tre quadri di paesi dipinto. Una Madonna con una Santa Caterina grande. Una Madonna con S. Giuseppe. Una Madonna e una Nonciata. Due quadretti piccoli in legno di due donne belle. Ritratti di Bradamante, Marsina, Isabella, et Doralice de Magnani. Ritratti di Venturo, Pietro, Ludovico, Niccolo, Alessandro, Gio: Antonio, Torquasso, Pietro e Lorenzo de Magnani.

Un quadretto con due spose. Due Nonciate. Una Santa Cecilia. Cinquantatre quadretti di pittura d'un braccio di longhezza in circa, vi sone presente Re, Donne, Buffoni, Masachare. Quattro donne ritratte. Quattro Gentildonne. Una Madonna di Reggio, una di Loreto. Una S. Caterina, e un Christo in croce. Una picccola Madonina cornisata. Cinque Madonne di San Luca et una Nonitiata piccola. Una Cecilia cornisata. Tre donne di maschera. Tre donne maschate nobile. Papa Clemente, Cardinal Bianchetti, una Vecchia chi fila. Un quadrettino di donna nuda.

From Fondo Fabbia/Fibri. Documenti Bonfiglioli, Vol 2, No 269, ASB.

23 October, 1609: Inventario Legale fatta dalla Molt. Illustre Signora Camilla Calzolari, dell'eredità di Gio Battista de' Prencipi dal Medico. Rogito di Ser. Andrea Fabbri Notaro di Bologna:

In Palazzo.

Nella Salotta d'abasso:

Un quadretto d'una Madonna di Loreto, Un quadro di un Christo corniciato di nero

Nella Sala di entrar:

15 quadri di pittura tutti corniciati di nero di varij personaggi - Papi, imperatori, rei, poeti et altri. Un quadretto di pittura di Sig. Guizzardo.

Nella stanza che guarda nella corte:

Un quadretto di una Nunziata di Fiorenza corniciata di nero. Un quadretto d'una Madonna col Putto in braccio piccola corniciato di nero. Un quadretto d'un San Francesco di Paolo corniciato di nero. Una Nunziata corniciata sopra l'uscio.

Nella seconda stanza:

7 quadri dipinti di varie fatte de' Principi e Principesse. Un quadrettino d'una Madonna corniciato di nero, Un quadrettino d'un San Francesco in carta colorata.

Nella terza Stanza:

Un quadretto dipinto di varij personaggi. Un quadretto di testo d'una Madonna di Loreto.

Prima Stanza al'entrare:

Un quadro antico dipinto d'una Donna. Una Madonna di San Luca in quadretto.

Seconda Stanza:

Una Madonna di San Luca cornicato di nero.

Nella prima camera della Signora Madonna vecchia:

4 quadretti dipinti di varie fatte.

Nella Seconda Camera della Signora

Un ancona d'una Madonna 9 quadretti di varie fatti.

Nella Stanza che segue:

Una Madonna antica di rilievo. 4 quadri dipinti vecchi e rotti.

In Villa

Quadri di figure d'un Muzio Romano, uno di Pastore, uno di Venere, e Marzo pressi la veste di Vulcano. Un quadrettino d'un Cristo antico. Un quadro di pittura su la fuga d'Anjelica e Merderoz. Un quadro d'una Madonna e San Carlo corniciato di nero. Quadri di pittura delle quattro stagione dell'anno con diverse figure e animali. Un quadro also d'una pittura di un Christo flagellato, con altre diverse figure. Un quadro di un Christo con la nave di San Pietro corniaiato di nero. Un quadro di un Sebastiano corniciato di nero. Un quadro di un S. Farncesco. Un quadro con una Madonna con più figure cornicato di noce.

Nella andata della Capellina

Quadretti con la descrizione di varij paesi. Un quadro d'una Madonna, un S. Francesco, un Christo, et una pittura con un segno del Tauro.

Nella Capellina:

Quadri di pittura tutti di San Girolamo. Una ancona grande all'altare con una Madonna col Putto e S. Gioseffo.

Nella prima Stanza che segue all'uscire della Capella:

Un quadro di pittura di due Lucrezie Romane, un d'un Bacco, un con li vecchi di Susanna, un di Fiandra con 3 figure. Un quadro con li ritratti di tutti li Cardinali. Un quadretto di un Christo flagellato.

Nella Seconda Stanza che segue:

Un ritratto di Cardinale Paleotti. Un quadretto d'un Christo in bracce della Madonna. Un quadro di pittura d'un re e una regina con figure et uno che suone il violino. Un quadro d'una Madonna col Putto, S. Gioseffo e S. Giovanni. Un quadro con pittura d'un Dafne seguita dal Apollo. Una Madonna di San Luca.

Nella terza Camera.

Un quadro di lego con la descrizione del Mondo. Uno con la descrizione di Bologna. Un quadro d'una Madonna. Uno della creazione del Mondo.

Nella quarto Camera:

Un quadro in tela con diverse pitture di bizzaria. In carta con tela sotto l'Adorazione dell 3 Magi. 10 quadretti dipinti in carta cornicati. Un quadrettino dal letto d'una Madonna col puttino dipinto in rame corniciato di nero.

Nella prima Stanza all'entrar della Loggia:

12 Sibille dipinte in quadretti. Un quadro di pittura d'un Christo col li Farisei che disputano. Un ritratto d'una regina. Un quadro d'un Christo che va in Emaus con più figure. Un quadro d'una pasticceria. Quadretti delle 12 mesi dell'anno cornicati. Quadro d'una donna che si concia la testa in un bagno. 2 quadretti di due figure di Donne. Un quadretto d'una Nunziata di Fiorenza in rame. Un quadro con Figure d'un Marte et una Venere e Cupido. Un ritratto d'una donna. Un ritratto d'una Cleopatra. Un quadro d'un San Giacinto.

Nella sud Stanza:

Un quadretto dal letto d'una Madonna col Bmabino cornicato dal nero profilato d'oro. 4 quadretti piccoli di Fiandra. Uno quadro di 4 Sante. Un quadro d'una Madonna che scappa in Ejitto. Un quadro grande d'una Battaglia.

From Archivio Malvezzi-Lupari, Istrumenti 109, No 47

12 July, 1621, Inventario legale di Beni ereditanti lasciati del fu Gio: Battista Bianchini, fatta dal Co. e Senat Pietro Bianchini

Una Annonciata apresso il letto. Un quadro di S. Girolamo. Una Madonna indorata, un quadro col Crocefisso. Due quadri, uno della Madonna a oglio, e l'altro a guazzo.

Un quadro di Croecefisso sopra l'uscio. Un quadro di pittura con una Madonna. Un quadro con un 'Amore. Un quadro con una Donna nuda.

Una Madonna con il Signor in braccio, Un quadretto di pittura della Natività del Sig. sopra il letto. Quadri di pittura di teste di Principi. Un quadro con la testa di P. Gregorio tredici. Un quadro di pittura con un cane. Un quadro con la testa del Gran Duca. Un quadro d'una Venetia. Un altro quadro di due serviti. Un quadro sopra l'uscio con tre teste. Un quadro di pittura ad'oglio d'una Signora. Un quadro di rame d'una Annonciata. Un quadro di due Ammanti.

From Atti Notarile di Ventura Sturoli, Protocollo 10, Archivio Notarile, ASB
3 April, 1623, "Additione dell'eredità di Laudomia Gozzadini, fatta dal Berenice Gozzadini"

Nella Sala di Basso:

Un quadro grande con cinque figure della famelia Gozadina. 18 quadri di persone diverse della famelia Gozadina. Due ritratti di Cardinali della famelia d'Este. Un quadro della Madonna, e S. Michael e S. Raimondo.

Nella Stanza atacato a detta Sala:

Un quadro di San Francesco. Una Madonna con il putto, S. Giosepho, S. Catherina

Nella Camera che segue

Un ritratto della Suora Placidia. Un quadro di Papa Sisto et uno di Papa Clemente ottavo,

Nella Camera attaccata a detta Stanza

Un quadro d'un Santo con più figure. Un quadro d'un Cardinale Gozadino.

Paintings by Lavinia Fontana in *Descrizione di molti quadri del Principe Filippo Hercolani, Marchese del Florimonte, pubblicata in occasione delle sue Nozze con la Signora Cavriani*, c. 1770, Ms, B. 384, BCB

Lavinia Fontana

"Di questa valorosa Pittrice, vedesi qui una delle sue più Magistrati fatiche nominata dal Malvasia e compendiata dal Baglione...che poi nell altre susseguenti più non si nomina per essere stata venduta alla Casa Ercolani e in sua sostituito un quadro a secco d'un moderno Accademica Clementati, con dispiacere degli Intendenti. E Questa la bella Tavola d'Altare che stava nella Chiesa de Servi. Sotto si legga: "Lavinia Fontana de Zappis fac. 1591"

Fe eccellente, particolarmente per Ritratti, molti di quali veggasi in questa raccolta, e sono:-
Un Uom venerando sendenti con un Cane e nel braccio della Sedia sta scritto "Lavinia Fontana Zappia essi: 1597

Una donna vestita all'antica con un cameo in mano

Altra con cagnoletto in braccio.

Altra accarezzante un cane sopra tavolino

Mezza figura d'uomo con spado al fianco

Una Matrona sedente con un fanciullo

Altra vestita a bruno

Un uomo con collare alla spagnuola

Altro vestito a sceruccio

Donna con velo nero in capo

Uomo intiero armato

Altro di un Giovane con un cane

Finalmente, un S. Francesco stimazato in bel Paese, col compagno che lo sta mirando, e sotto li parole, "Lavinia Fontana de Zappis faciebat 1579"

Below is a letter written to Bianca Capello, the Medici Duchess, from Fra Filippo Barbieri on December 21, 1585. Barbieri comments that he feels that of the many portraits painted of the Duchess, the best by far is by Scipione Pulzone (il Gaetano). He is anxious that Bianca should consider the "new Apelles", a young woman called Lavinia Fontana. Barbieri recently visited Fontana to order a picture of Christ's face and saw portraits by her, one apparently of Francesco Panigarola, another of Senator Aldrovandi, one of her husband and one of her father, works which lack only the living spirit. If the Duchess wishes it, works by Fontana could be sent to her. He promises the Duchess that he is not lying when he tells her she will see a real work of nature in Fontana and that she does not work as an artist out of necessity but because as she is inclined towards it, as she is noble, rich and virtuous.

Archivio di Stato di Firenze

Medici di Principi, vol 5938, fol 40-41

"Sapendo quanti ritratti , et da quanti valenti huomini siano stati fatti di V.A. Ser.ma, ne mai alcuno habbia portato ritrarne il vero, et fra tanti no' è il meglio di quello, che ultimamente ha fatto il Gaetano. Per tanto essendo suscitato un'novo Apelle in una gratiosa giovane detta la Fontana, con la quale fu io a parlamenti heri l'alt^o per ordinargli un volto di Christo, mostrandomi delle sue opere, et vedendo come havevano più della noi, che dell'arte, oltre, che me fece stupire particolarmente, vedendo il R. P. Panie(la) (Reverend Padre Panigarola?), il Senator Aldrovando Bolognese; il consorto di lei, et suo Messier ritratti dalle sue Mani naturalissimamente, che altro no gli mancava che lo spirito; ci trasportassimo col ragionamento sopra l'A.V. Sma et di tanti ritratti, che di lei erano stati fatti; dove che la Giovane me disse che molto gli vinceser/rinecrecer, il no haverla venduta, grado fu a Bologna; che ancor lei haverebbe fatto prova delle sue mani et della sua Idea; Penso se piacesse all'Altezza farne prova vedra in vero un miracolo di natura et come non mentisce; lei non lavora in questa Arte per bisogno, ma per suo disposto, perché e Nobile, ricca e virtuosa."

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